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# Women and Diplomatic Life: An Overview with Methodological Directions and Proposals

## 1 Introduction: New Perspectives on the Study of Diplomatic Life

This chapter has two primary objectives. First, I will offer a systematic review of the academic literature on the paths of women who circulated in various diplomatic circles throughout history. In particular, I will focus on publications from the last two decades that have endeavoured to renew the study of diplomatic history in several different fields, including cultural history, political history, women's history, and (to a lesser extent) the branch of international relations related to gender. In the hopes of contextualising a diverse body of work that has been produced in parallel disciplines that do not always intersect, I have limited my focus to three broad geographic regions: Western Europe, English-speaking North America, and Latin America. Based on my readings and reflections, I will offer a potential reading list for future study on this topic. Secondly, I will draw on experiences from the research I have conducted in recent years to propose a series of profiles that can help us study the lives of Latin American women in the nineteenth century and the period leading up to the First World War. I will also offer a few methodological reflections for studies on these women. I hope that this text will be, in part, an invitation to broaden these lines of inquiry and incorporate other parts of the world and other profiles that will enrich our understanding of women's role in diplomacy.

Over the course of decades, topics related to nations' international reach, the emergence of foreign services, and the professionalisation of the diplomatic exercise gave rise to state histories, which attend to the territorial definitions, moments of military tension, and agreements that lead nations to extend themselves into the international arena. However, this diplomatic history of the relations among nations left no space for considering non-governmental actors or non-state spaces. Since the early 2000s, in turn, the fruitful field of "new diplomatic history" has made it a primary goal to revise and transcend foreign services' strictly institutional histories of these diplomatic domains. By moving its focus away from state issues and dynamics, this body of work takes new actors

and spaces as its objects of study and interest. These efforts have created more space to study figures who were previously considered secondary actors or mere “bystanders” in the international arena.

These new perspectives have also encouraged another line of academic interest, of particular relevance here, that has endeavoured to study certain individual actors as a means of thinking about “diplomatic experiences”. In other words, this approach focuses on the lived experience and behaviours of various agents in diplomatic networks. In so doing, it has elevated figures who were absent from books about state diplomacy for decades to centre-stage. Moreover, it has generated new questions about actors who had previously been studied, but only from perspectives that did not interrogate the performative aspects of actors, including secretaries. Thus, new attention is being paid to aspects such as the particular modes of communication, gesture, and appearance that were deemed appropriate for diplomatic environs (Sabbatini and Volpini 2011; Andretta et al. 2020). This “diplomatic experience” approach was first illustrated in books on the 15th and 17th centuries that explored the state duties of diplomatic envoys and the concrete experiences of the individuals who frequented European courts, went on missions to the Vatican, and negotiated matters of the state (Biow 2002; Frigo 2000). In addition, these new scholars also studied the opportunities these duties created for the people performing them, the margins of autonomy that diplomatic envoys enjoyed, and the different forms of *self-fashioning* – individual, collective, and governmental – that they engaged in on the international stage (Sowerby and Craigwood 2019).

When it comes to choosing objects of study, constructing research questions, and reviewing various aspects, the new openings created by new diplomatic history foster a broadening of the study of women and diplomatic life. In the following section, I will endeavour to offer an overview of potential readings that can help us apply these new perspectives that have so far only been applied in European and English-speaking North American academic circles.

## 2 Women and Diplomatic Life: Overview and Literature Review

In the context of the research agendas mentioned above, the role of women in diplomatic life has taken on greater currency both within academia and among the general public. This increased interest is evidenced by recent signals from literary markets that target broad audiences, including the success of books such as Katie Hickman’s *Daughters of Britannia: The Lives and Times of Diplomatic*

*Wives* (1999 and later editions), Benedetta Craveri's *Amanti e Regine. Il Potere delle Donne* (2005, with later editions in Spanish, Italian, and French), André Dore-Audiber's *Propos Irrévérérencieux d'une Épouse d'Ambassadeur* (2002), and Huguette Pérol's memoir *Femme d'Ambassadeur* (2002).

The body of academic work dedicated to women in diplomatic circles varies in depth depending on time period and location. Here, I will offer an overview focused specifically on texts about Western Europe, Latin America and English-speaking North America. Within this heterogeneous body of work, I will propose five categories organised around common areas of interests, which I will describe in detail below.

The first group comprises profiles of European women who were part of the diplomatic culture of the courts between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The texts within it include analyses of women's roles and actions in marital affairs and aristocratic salons, as well as accounts of princesses' international travels and diplomatic visits to resolve regional conflicts, among other works. They highlight a few individual women as "diplomatic brides" or "dynastic betrothed" who transcended the rigid terms proposed by studies on "marriage markets" to be recognized as drivers of relationships and negotiations in their own right. The works in this category explore the scope of women's influence on court relations and problematize the overlaps and tensions between personal ambitions, family interests, and state expectations. They focus on female figures in transnational diplomatic scenarios who entered the diplomatic arena, introduced innovations in their countries of origin, and became key emissaries at important junctures in geopolitical decision-making (Downie 1999; Sluga and James 2016). In this same category, other studies emphasise the role of women in court life, pointing to the courts as places where they could influence others and exchange politically salient information. The women described in these studies include widows, escorts, travellers, and camouflaged observers who essentially operated like spies (Broomhall 2018; Craveri 2005a, 2005b, and 2006; Daybell and Svante 2017; Matheson-Pollock and Fletcher 2018).

In line with these contributions, some published studies on the European kingdoms between the fifteenth and eighteenth century have attended to "ambassador's wives" or "ambassadors", emphasising that not all women from noble families were considered for such roles, which required certain recognizable abilities and manners. Integrated into diplomatic circles, these lady ambassadors wove networks of feminine sociability that could impact diplomatic decisions (Allen 2019; Comsa 2016; Hanotin 2013; Lauzon 2014).

A second noteworthy category of works on women and European diplomatic life includes studies that ask new questions about well-known *salonières*, paying greater attention to their actions as mediators. In these contributions, certain

names stand out over others, including Germaine de Stäel, Dorothea Lieven, and Marie de Vichy-Chamrond (known as Madame de Stäel, Madame Lieven, and Madame du Duffand). However, researchers have also begun to explore the lives of other women and pay more attention to the ways in which ideas and news were exchanged in the salons, and some recent studies have tried to rethink the dynamics of leisure and sociability in “everyday life” by considering how they overlapped with the requirement that women who attended salons show themselves to be cultured and educated in order to be recognized as social and cultural movers (Leduc 2020). These studies most commonly focus on the power these women had in diplomatic intrigues thanks to their titles, family connections, and proximity to men who made political decisions; on their experiences in spaces of debate; and, in some cases, on the chances they had to be part of spheres of public discussion beyond the salons, including international congresses where territorial problems were addressed and decisions about war and peace were taken (Anderson 2006; Cromwell 2007; Craveri 2006; Guenther 2012; Kale 2002, 2006a, and 2006b; Sánchez Mejía 2015; Sluga and James 2016).

A third line of academic production concentrates on the period between the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, drawing connections between the European and American settings. These studies depart from a common diagnosis: they all consider the First World War to be a watershed moment for diplomacy and the organisation of foreign services around the world. Focusing on this time frame, various authors have made a point of putting figures associated with the aristocratic salons of diplomatic social life into conversation with those in other roles that were established by the formation of nation states and the professionalisation of state functionaries. In this context, career diplomats and *practitioners* began to deploy new forms of expertise. Where the diplomatic culture of the courts had been connected to aristocratic periods, manners, and dialects, in the nineteenth century, “bourgeois styles”, values, and modes of behaviour began to prevail in diplomatic circles (Casado Sánchez and Moreno Seco 2014). In this context, new roles for women in the public sphere opened, and the number of positions in the foreign service multiplied (Sluga and James 2016). One role that is particularly relevant to the study of women’s trajectory in diplomatic spaces is that of “diplomatic dames (or ladies)”, a term that has been used to refer to certain wives of North American diplomats. The role of these women in early twentieth-century diplomacy was “almost professional”, since they exemplified certain attitudes, knew the protocols, and never improvised in their roles as hostesses and organisers of dinners and parties. Through this work, they built relationships with other diplomats’ wives and served as the mediators of relationships between functionaries from different parts of the world (Mori 2015; Wood 2005).

These studies build, in part, on a line of inquiry that was proposed decades ago, which highlighted the figure of the “ambassador’s wife” or “diplomat’s spouse” (Hochschild 1969; Perkins 1954). Several of these newer studies reference women’s appearances, the use of beauty and charm as tools, the role of manners in communication, and related issues (Wood 2007). These same considerations are also relevant to notions of the “diplomatic partner” or “diplomatic companion”, which were proposed to establish the role of diplomatic companions as transversal actors in the process of establishing relations, and even as agents of *soft power*. These analyses have applied personal, social, and political lenses to the trajectories not only of diplomatic wives in international relations, but also the roles of secretaries, clerks, and other actors who collaborated in the consolidation of networks and negotiations through their friendships and affections (Domett 2005; Wood 2015). In some studies related to twentieth-century diplomacy, the expression “unofficial ambassadors” is used to refer to the role that women in diplomatic services occupied for centuries – a role which has led certain specialists to describe these women as agents of “non-state cultural diplomacy” who built relationships and transmitted their nations’ cultural values in foreign lands (Biltekin 2020).

A fourth group of scholarly contributions focuses on the processes that followed the First World War, when diplomatic offices multiplied, and opportunities emerged within national foreign services and international organisations for certain women to find a place of their own. Over the course of the twentieth century, new professional positions also opened to women who had certain skills that could support bureaucracies: translators, accountants, stenographers, and other office jobs.

One part of the literature in this category has centred on women who played key roles in Pan-American diplomatic circles (Berger 2015; Cándida Smith 2017) and agencies of international cooperation (Goodman 2012; Pita González 2014), as well as in the state departments of nations including Australia (Stephenson 2019), Canada (Bashevtin 2009), the United States (Calkin 1978; Jeffreys-Jones 1997; Nash 2002; Wood 2015), Mexico (Ramírez Flores 2006), France (Thuillier 1989), Great Britain (McCarthy 2009, 2014, 2015) and Holland (Dierikx 2020). Other studies have turned their gaze to movements, gatherings, and transnational currents of thought and action in which women played relevant roles, including pacifist and anti-war movements, struggles for civil and political rights, and actions by feminist movements and other associations that began in civil society and eventually led to political and humanitarian demands (Alonso 1992; Blasco Lisa and Magallón Portolés 2020; Gottlieb and Johnson 2020; Irive 2002; McKenzie 2011; Papachristou 1990; Patterson 2008; Rupp 1994, 1996). In addition, some recent contributions

have incorporated the study of women's office roles in spaces connected to the diplomatic circuit (Gottlieb and Johnson 2020).

The fifth and final category in recent literature on women's role in diplomacy comes out of the discipline of International Relations and attends to the women who occupied fully professionalised diplomatic positions during the second half of the twentieth century and the first years of the twenty-first. Some compiled volumes that include perspectives on these roles have focused on specific national cases, including France (Denéchère 2003) and Brazil (Soares Balestero 2017), while others offer more general, panoramic overview Bayes 2012; Alexander, Bolzendahl, and Jalalzai 2018; Sibley 2012). Several of these Works analyse public imagination and legislation around gender equality, focusing on women who build careers in traditionally masculine fields (Foot 1990; Gaspard 2000, 2002; May 1994).

Several of these Works have been framed as part of the “new diplomatic history” (Schweizer and Schumann 2008). The primary goal of this movement, which has borne fruit since the early 2000s, is to revise and transcend the strictly institutional histories of the domains created by the foreign service. Constructed from motifs of international expansion, the emergence of embassies, and the professionalisation of the diplomatic office, these state histories attend to the territorial definitions, moments of military tension, and agreements that led nations to extend themselves into the international arena.

Thus far, we have outlined and contextualised the most well-trodden lines of inquiry related to women and diplomatic life in Western European and English-speaking North American contexts and studies that consider the connections between distant parts of the world. Now, I will outline some notable trends that offer theoretical frameworks and suggest methodological approaches, moving transversally through part of the body of literature described above. The first trend, which is most common in historical studies, centres *women's agency* or *female agency* (Sluga and James 2016; James 2020) and analyses the trajectories of women as active subjects within diplomacy – mediators in state affairs, relationship builders, and active political negotiators. In recent years, as these works have interrogated the question of agency, several of them have begun to problematize perspectives on gender in a more systemic way (Casidy 2018). The second trend proposes to study the experiences of women and men in diplomatic circles from a dynamic perspective, without falling into the temptation to impose strict lines between different spheres – private or intimate, domestic, personal, public, and governmental (Dean 2012; Loriol 2016; McEnaney 2021). The third, which in dialogue with the second, places the emphasis on the experiences and practices of diplomatic agents, including women, so it is well positioned to consider margins of autonomy, overlaps between state and

experiential dimensions, the possibility of devising personal agendas in ritualised and protocolised contexts, and the analysis of manners, jargons, gestures, and means of communication (Andretta *et al.* 2020; Biow 2002; Frigo 2020; Towns and Niklasson 2020; Towns 2020). The fourth, which comes from International Relations, references the “gender turn in diplomacy”, providing new research agendas that are alert to the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion that have affected women in diplomatic spheres. These new agendas incorporate feminist theory, combining it with the field of Foreign Policy Analysis (Aggestam 2019; Aggestam and Town 2019; Aggestam and True 2020).

In certain regions, mostly European and North American, the study of women and diplomatic life is a field that has been continuously developing for the last two decades, as evidenced by research projects, international colloquia, and monographic and collective volumes.<sup>1</sup> In various Latin American nations, meanwhile, the body of research on the subject is incipient but promising, as I will aim to demonstrate in the next section.

### 3 Latin American Women and Diplomatic Life: Challenges and Approaches

Over the course of the last decade, the innovations of new diplomatic history have made their way into Latin America historiographical circles. New interpretive lines have emerged thanks to the research and publications of a broad range of specialists from fields such as history, anthropology, international studies, and political science. Some of the characteristics that distinguish these new efforts from traditional histories of diplomacy and the connections between nations include: a transdisciplinary attitude that enables the use of a range of different toolboxes to

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<sup>1</sup> Some projects developed in the last two decades include: “Women of the World: Gender, British Diplomacy, and International Politics, c. 1870 to the Present” (2012), led by Helen McCarthy at Queen Mary University of London [<https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FI026723%2F1>, accessed 31 Jan. 2022]; “Women and Peacebuilding: A Multilevel Perspective”, led by Vanessa Newby at Leiden University [<https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/research/research-projects/governance-and-global-affairs/women-and-peacebuilding-a-multilevel-perspective>, accessed 21 Jan. 2022]; “A International History of Gender and Diplomacy”, directed by Ann Towns at the University of Gothenburg [<https://www.gu.se/en/research/an-international-history-of-gender-and-diplomac>, accessed 31 Jan. 2022]; and “Gendering Diplomacy and Foreign Policy”, coordinated by Karin Aggestam and Annika Bergman-Rosamond at Lund University [<https://www.svet.lu.se/en/research-0/research-projects/gendering-diplomacy-and-foreign-policy?q=research/research-projects/gender-and-international-negotiations>, accessed 31 Jan. 2022].



study networks, forms of social life, trajectories, and spaces for knowledge production and circulation with international reach; interpretative stakes that articulate scales of analysis – national, regional, and international; and the choice of objects of study that, in and of themselves, facilitate a transnational perspective and transcend historiographical nationalisms.<sup>2</sup>

In Latin America, the study of women and diplomatic life is still an incipient field whose early contributions suggest possibilities that will surely merit development in the years to come. Currently, they include several contributions about individual countries that pay specific attention to women who are part of foreign services and international organisations. Recent works on Brazil, for example, have analysed the itineraries of important female figures, both to study the history of women in the royal court and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty) and to compare the trajectories of diplomatic women in Portugal and Brazil (De Souza Farias 2017 and 2019). Several contributions on the Mexican context have lingered on Edith O’Shaughnessy, the wife of a North American *chargé d’affaires*. O’Shaughnessy has received attention for two primary reasons: her marriage took place in Mexico during the first stage of the Mexican Revolution, and she wrote a memoir about those events called *A Diplomat’s Wife in Mexico* (1916) (Wood, 2004; Pita González y Ayala Flores, 2015). In turn, the Russian diplomat Alexandra Kollontai’s posting in Mexico has also generated interest (Ortiz Peralta, 2017). As for women born on Mexican soil, the life of Palma Guillén has also been an object of study (Huck, 1999; Pompa Alcalá,

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<sup>2</sup> For an approximation of the possibilities that have opened up in recent years, see the following dossiers: “Relaciones Internacionales, Identidades Colectivas y Vida Intelectual en América Latina, 1810–1945”, coordinated by Ori Preuss and Juan Pablo Scarfi and published in the *Revista Complutense de Historia de América* 39 (2013), which contains articles by Paula Bruno, Charles Jones, João Paulo Coelho de Souza Rodrigues, and Juan Pablo Scarfi; “Diplomacia, Vida Cultural y Producción de Saberes”, coordinated by Juan Pablo Scarfi and published in dossiers distributed by *historiapolitica.com*, as part of volume 66 (2015), which contains articles by Martín Bergel, Paula Bruno, Álvaro Fernández Bravo, Pablo Ortemberg, and Juan Pablo Scarfi; “Panamericanismo, Hispanoamericanismo y Nacionalismo en los Festejos Identitarios de América Latina, 1880–1920: Performances y Encrucijadas de Diplomáticos e Intelectuales”, coordinated by Pablo Ortemberg and published in *Anuario IEHS* 32.1 (2017), with articles by Paula Bruno, Alexandra Pita González, Javier Moreno Luzón, and Ascensión Martínez Riaza; “Intelectuales y diplomacia en América Latina”, coordinated by Carlos Marichal and Alexandra Pita Gonzáles in *Revista de Historia de América* 159 (2019), with articles by Paula Bruno, Juan Pablo Scarfi, Nathalia Henrich, Mariana Moraes Medina, and Cecilia Guadalupe Neubauer; “Reflexiones Sobre el Uso de Fuentes Diplomáticas para la Reconstrucción Histórica de la Argentina de la *Belle Époque*”, coordinated by Martín Albornoz and Agustina Rayes and published in *Revista Electrónica de Fuentes y Archivos* 20 (2020), which features articles by Martín Albornoz, Paula Bruno, Lila Caimari, Pablo Ortemberg, and Agustina Rayes.



2019). In Chile's case, most attention in this area has focused on Gabriela Mistral, who represented her country in several diplomatic positions and as a member of different international organizations (Caballé 1993; Horan 2009a, 2009b; Wilkins 2015).

There are also other studies that may not focus strictly on women and diplomatic life, but still tell the stories of women in other regions who fall within these interpretative coordinates, such as the Latin American *salonières* (Batticuore, 2005; Chambers 2005), or dynastic figures who influenced monarchical crises and the fabric of the revolutions that freed Latin America from colonial bondage (Ternavasio 2015).

Here, I would like to offer a few reflections from a research project that I coordinated, which was published as a book (Bruno, Pita, and Alvarado 2021), in the hopes that that may prove useful in thinking about the challenges and opportunities implicated in studying native-born Latin American women involved in diplomatic life – or “cultural ambassadors”, as I call them. This classification is based on the following characteristics: as “daughters” of their countries in foreign territories, these women acted as facilitators of relationships and builders of rapport in the world of diplomacy; they were perceived as capable of mediating in the political sphere, and they generated images, information, and news that circulated in different settings on a transnational scale. At the same time, in other regions, they were considered public women and representatives of the interests and values of their nations. Thus, in full cognition of the challenges inherent in thinking about cultural transfers and relations that this book outlines, these women served – sometimes against their will and their own best interests – as bearers of values, ideas, and popular notions that associated with or assumed to be associated with the places they came from (be they local, national, or regional). In primary sources, in fact, there are abundant references to “Spanish types” – a term that was used to refer to women from former Spanish colonies – which comment on the levels of “civilization” and “progress” they brought with them, as well as other sections that aim to describe these women as epitomes of the American, Latin American, or national identity of their homelands. To offer some examples, I will suggest some profiles that may help us analyse these women, as well as some considerations about the archival research and methodological challenges involved in studying their trajectories.

From the second half of the nineteenth century through the beginnings of the twentieth century, the pace of the consolidation of Latin American nation states created new opportunities for men from certain families and positions to access roles within the government. Among these opportunities, the foreign service enabled Latin Americans to move through highly formalised diplomatic

circles and spaces that had established protocols, some of which had been developed over centuries (Delgado Llanos and Sánchez Andrés 2012). Special envoys, *chargés d'affaires*, plenipotentiaries, consuls, and *attachés* represented only a portion of the positions that men began to exercise on behalf of the republics (Bruno 2018; Cagliaio Vila and Elías-Cano 2018; Suárez Argüello and Sánchez Andrés 2017). During this same period, certain Spanish-speaking women who had born in the Americas were able to occupy roles in diplomatic spheres as spouses, mothers, daughters, hostesses, and companions.

In the twentieth century, especially in the context that emerged in the wake of the First World War, diplomacy served as the transnational branch of nation states' administrations and began to overlap with the circles that resulted from the emergence of international organisations. The same time period saw the emergence of actors who were embedded in causes that transcended frontiers and struggled for broad demands such as pacifism, an end to war, or the broadening of civil and political rights (McKenzie 2011). In this context, as circles expanded and began to overlap and feed into one another, women occupied positions within organisations and other working worlds and continued to take action through social aid organisations and charities (Sánchez 2019). They also led movements and served as facilitators between groups that rose out of civil society and various levels of state and supranational administrations (Goodman 2012; Patterson, 2008).

Keeping these general trends in mind, I would like to turn to some individual figures from the nineteenth century until the First World War to lift up their stories and propose new directions for the study of Latin American women in diplomatic circles. In particular, the women I propose to profile lived out their trajectories before the great influx of professional women into diplomatic circles and international organisations. In other words, I aim to provide an overview of possible opportunities for study within a context that preceded not only expert female functionaries and career diplomats, but also trained female secretaries, official secretaries, and shorthand secretaries. While the three profiles I have chosen have similarities to the trajectories of diplomatic women in other regions, they also enable us to analyse the specific efforts and modulations made by women born in nations that were established after the breaking of colonial bonds.

*Diplomatic ladies:* Certain Latin American women embodied the profile of the so-called “diplomatic lady” (which is both an analytical term and a term that belongs to its era). This profile fused the characteristics of the *salonières* who drove the culture of conversation and the exchange of ideas in literary and political social life (Anderson 2006; Craveri 2005a; Craveri 2005b; Kale 2006a, 2006b) with the freedom of action that ambassador’s wives had; in Europe, the

figure of the diplomatic lady found its archetype in Paulina Clementina de Metternich-Winneburg, who was known as Madame Metternich. As we consider this profile, which is well-known in Europe, it will be important to mention certain particularities of the case of women born in Latin America. We must remember that while aristocratic and court-centred diplomatic cultures existed in *Ancien Régime* societies and had developed over the course of centuries, the Latin American women who were born in former Spanish colonies and began to accompany the official delegations of postrevolutionary governments had neither the knowledge base nor the social customs their European counterparts possessed. In other words, these were women who did not belong to old aristocratic families who began, as wives – as companions, or relations of male public figures – to go on diplomatic missions and enter the social fabrics of courts in Europe and other new American nations; as such, they passed through periods of apprenticeship to adjust to the rhythms and codes of conduct in other parts of the world.

I have noted certain differences in the way women from different Latin American countries were received in Europe. Brazilian-born women like Madame Lisboa – Maria Izabel Pinto Andrade de Lisboa, baroness of Japurá and wife of the special envoy and plenipotentiary of his Majesty Miguel Maria Lisboa, the emperor of Brazil and the baron of Japurá – were widely recognised by their European counterparts as diplomatic ladies and supporters of a legation that was on level footing with the Old World. Women born in Argentina who were married to men with diplomatic duties, meanwhile, like Eduarda Mansilla and Guillermina Oliveira Cézar, were sometimes judged differently for being from the New World.

Both the Brazilian and Argentinian women went through apprenticeships to prepare to merge into more seasoned diplomatic arenas, learning how to dress, act, converse, and organise events; over time, they became able to standardise themselves to match their European counterparts, becoming cheerleaders for diplomatic coteries. At the same time, since Latin American foreign services were still in the process of establishing themselves, they also served as occasional translators, unpaid administrative assistants, intermediaries, and makers of networks of friendship and affection. Lastly, it is worth noting that at a time when presidential tours were not so commonplace and the figure of the “first lady” had not yet been established, spouses, partners, and diplomatic ladies were the women who represented the values and characteristics of their countries in the transnationalised world. We see this at work, for example, in the fact that during their stint as Argentine representatives in Madrid, Guillermina Oliveira Cézar and her husband, Eduardo Wilde, successfully arranged for the Infanta Isabel de Borbón to attend the celebration of the Argentine Centenary in 1910, which is considered a stamp of the alliance between Spain and Argentina. In that moment,

Spain ceased to be thought of as the former imperial metropolis and became, instead, a “motherland” that treated its former colonies like “beloved daughters”.

*Ambassadors for peace:* In Latin America, the nineteenth century was marked by constant confrontations, borders redefinitions, and disputes among the new nations over the control of certain territories. In this context, there were several instances when efforts to define borders culminated in meetings, assessments, and treaties that established the borders. Institutional diplomatic history has kept a record of how these conflicts were resolved by means of arbitration awards and meetings among state officials. My studies have confirmed that as these partitions and repartitions took place, public campaigns for Latin American fraternity kept pace within civil society and mediated the conflicts. Within these initiatives, women’s labour stood out. From my perspective, the role of elite women who undertook pacifist activism before the First World War merits particular attention. In Europe, we find figures such as Bertha von Suttner, who became the first woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1905. Von Suttner’s characteristics fit a certain profile: she was from a military family, held the title of baroness, was educated in cosmopolitan circles, and managed to make a place for herself on the stage of the international pacifist movement. In Latin America, once again, it is a less straightforward task to find women who can be compared to this profile. At times, for example, certain pacifist circles overlapped with the circles of Catholic women, and it can be challenging to find the names of these women. Nevertheless, I believe it is worth making the effort to follow leads in order to find profiles such as that of Ángela Oliveira César, born in Argentina, who was the driving force behind the project that placed the so-called “Christ of the Andes” on the mountainous border between Chile and Argentina. In 1908, César founded the Asociación Sud-Americana de Paz Universal [South American Universal Peace Union], which was the first of its kind in Latin America.

Oliveira César’s activism as an ambassador for peace were neither mandated by any part of the state administration nor related to her husband’s work, yet they created international ripples that made her into an example for international pacifist circles. As a result, at times, her actions were recognised and “officialised” after they actually took place. Perhaps her initiatives can be usefully framed by the notion of “non-state cultural diplomacy” (Biltekin 2020), since they achieved wide influence and made Oliveira César into the first woman born in Latin America to be a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1911 (Norderval 2021). It would also be interesting to analyse a woman of Oliveira César’s profile because her case illustrates how women from new nations got involved, in their own way, in a transnational civil society with shared demands and

common initiatives that took on particular modulations in each geographic region (Rupp 1994; Batliwala and Brown 2006).

*Diplomatic writers:* The role of writer-diplomats – those who are both writers and diplomats – has been studied in different regions and from different perspectives (Badel *et al.* 2012; Constantinou 1996). In discussions about members of Latin American foreign services, both male and female, the notion of “poet diplomacy” or “writer diplomacy” is sometimes invoked, with figures such as Amado Nervo and Juan Zorrilla de San Martín, in the nineteenth century, and Alfonso Reyes and Gabriela Mistral, in the twentieth, serving as its oft-mentioned incarnations. In those cases of those particular names, however, their trajectory as writers preceded their involvement in diplomatic missions. In turn, I am interested in bringing further attention to women of another profile: those who have written works of fiction or memoir, or studies on specific topics within diplomatic spheres, but have not necessarily garnered a large reputation in the literary culture of their countries of origin. For Latin American women in particular, the mere fact of travelling so far from their birthplaces created opportunities to circulate in settings that were nothing like those they knew at home. They became cosmopolitan women who articulated the ideas, customs, and habits of diverse regions. In this sense, their first steps onto the international stage were often the trips to Europe that were part of the culture of the *Grand Tour*. These journeys functioned as rites of initiation into diplomatic life – the transitional experience through which individuals abandoned provincial attitudes and became cosmopolitan (Mori 2013). If this initial exposure enabled women to get to know other regions, learn or practise foreign languages, and develop their social skills, more prolonged diplomatic postings immersed them fully in the “broader world” of transnational diplomacy, which could spark their intellectual interests (Mösslang and Riotte 2008). In turn, some have advanced hypotheses about how male figures in the world of diplomacy acknowledged their wives as co-authors of their own intellectual work within diplomatic spheres (Bassnett 2011). In light of these insights, I believe the profiles of Latin American women who have developed writing projects in diplomatic contexts and circles are worthy of study for several reasons: they had a different experience of the world than their countrywomen, they moved through spaces that put them in contact with men and women of letters from other parts of the world, and they were proximate with the owners of publishing houses and journals in various cities. Moreover, in spite of diplomatic life’s hectic nature – the social events, the organisation of salons and coteries, the circulation in different legations and countries, the participation in various nations’ official proceedings – these women were able to find time to dedicate themselves to writing, especially in the summer season. Occasionally, the titles

of the literary works they produced offer immediate, clear evidence of a connection between their lives and diplomacy, but I believe we can also think of other books, such as those classed as travel literature (for example), as archives that can help us penetrate into the interiors of diplomatic life. In this category, I studied the case of Eduarda Mansilla, whose book *Recuerdos de Viaje* [Memories of Travel], published at the start of the 1880s, is generally considered a work of travel literature. However, by rereading the text and reexamining it from comparative perspective alongside archival sources, I have been able to think of it as a testimonial archive about Mansilla's diplomatic experience in the 1860s and the paths walked by a Latin American woman who attempted to join the circles where international political decisions were made without possessing the necessary abilities. In addition, I also analysed the text that led reviewers to dub Mansilla a "diplomatic writer" – *Pablo, ou la Vie dans les Pampas* [Pablo, or Life in the Pampas], a book about life in her native Argentina that she published in Paris.

Having finished giving an overview of the lives of several women who fit the profiles I have studied, I would like to conclude this chapter with some closing reflections on the archives and sources that are currently available and the limitations and opportunities of studying the aforementioned profiles. In general, in Latin American diplomatic documents from the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, women are mentioned only in vague and slippery terms. Read through today's eyes, the available correspondence becomes shocking when one registers just how limited the space afforded to women in notes and cards was. The exchanges are full of courtesy greetings to daughters and wives; passing references to women's beauty and physiques; notes of gratitude for packages of sweets or fruits; and portraits of women, sent by men with a greeting and a signature. Moreover, women's names are written using diminutive expressions, initials, or nicknames that only relatives could recognize. Under these conditions, we are obligated to study the outlines of the lives of various diplomatic men in order to trace the footprints of the women at their sides (mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters) who enriched their experiences as diplomats in distant legations. This angle of approach is possible when it comes to women who were part of the male diplomatic community, but it is less simple when it comes to those who undertook their own initiatives.

Along with sources from state foreign service archives and personal papers, another preferred archive for information about these women can be found in periodical publications. However, using these sources involves certain challenges. First of all, women's full proper names are almost never given, so one must search in various languages for expressions like "lady of" and "madam

of” – or later, in the twentieth century, for phrases like “Mexican ministress” or “Chilean ambassadress”, which do not necessarily correspond to official titles.

Secondly, we must consider that the world of diplomacy was influenced by home countries’ national strategies and dynamics in the host countries, as well as codes of social conduct and trends in different regions. Therefore, the profiles of women in diplomatic life can generally be found in the columns dedicated to the society pages, daily life, musical seasons, and commentary on styles and trends. Furthermore, our searches must be refined to account for the fact that these women were being depicted by various reporters who were different from them. Occasionally, depictions of Latin American women’s countries of origin and reflections and ponderings about their power as political mediators, builders of suitable relations, or cultural movers sneak in among accounts of beauty and good taste and descriptions of dresses and jewellery; however, the positive stereotype of diplomacy as a world of glamour and leisure makes it challenging to reconstruct the paths of the women who moved through it.

Finally, even though these nineteenth- and early twentieth-century periodical sources can be sparse, I believe we must take on the challenge of trying to glean the emotional states that women in diplomatic life went through, such as weariness, loneliness, worry about economic instability, and sensations of isolation and uprooting. While it is very difficult to find cards and letters written by those women, an effort must be made to compare archives and cross-reference sources to analyse the tensions caused by their constant public exposure – which appeared to outsiders as leisure, luxury, glamour, and entertainment – and the women’s’ own judgements about the costs and tribulations of the diplomatic experience.

## 4 Closing Considerations

The editors of this book have set us the challenge of thinking about circulations and cultural transfers through a lens that centres different actors and spaces. This particular chapter has given an overview of the available literature on broad geographic regions – Western Europe, English-speaking North America, and Latin America – and proposed some possibilities for articulating notions of local, national, and global by studying the concrete experiences of women in diplomatic life.

Given that my proposals focus on women who did not hold governmental positions or other official roles – that is, women who did not rely on credentials when they represented their countries – I believe that it is advisable not to fall



into the temptation to establish strict borders between notions such as “formal representation” and “informal representation”, or between “private and domestic space” and the “public and political arena”. Several contributions from the new diplomatic history movement have addressed the ways in which these divisions have ceased to be productive for thinking about the diplomatic stage. Several reasons for this fact are based in the very dynamics of spheres of foreign service. For example, legations were made up of members of a family, which could include friends; relatives both close and distant; passing visitors; and other affiliates who were connected to members of the legation, at times by a shared language or shared membership in a group. In other writings, in fact, I have proposed the term “diplomatic family” for thinking about these extended groups who were part of legations and inhabited their spaces. In the study at hand, the women performed several different prescribed roles, including that of hostess or social entertainer, while other roles began to emerge through the specific experiences that were imposed on them by the various destinies they were sent off to. In fact, the women who were thought of as possessing a diplomatic *savoir faire* were those who quickly grasped which protocols to follow, what social norms were appropriate in each region, and how they were expected to develop relationships of friendship and kinship within the context of particular negotiations.

Since the profiles I have proposed to study are not from an era of professionalisation when women could be considered experts or *practitioners*, I have attempted to demonstrate the difficulties involved in finding the right concepts to encompass their actions on the international stage. In some instances, they were seen as bearers of their nations’ values, ideas, and attitudes without intending to be, for example, while in others, their public endeavours and intellectual labours came out of their own individual interests but ended up being officially held up as valuable initiatives of their nations’ governments. Thus, I believe that the concept of *soft power* that this book aims to problematise incentivises us to explore other concepts as well, including the idea of “non-state cultural diplomacy” – introduced by Biltekin (2020) for her study of the role of Swedish women in North American circles – which demonstrates the extent to which women were able to become “unofficial ambassadors” and make their mark by representing their home countries without explicit official directives or concrete remuneration, using nothing but their gestures, attitudes, and modes of self-presentation in the field of political decision-making. Where these considerations have in some ways acknowledged the above-mentioned differences between official (or formal) and unofficial (or informal), I have proposed the concept of “cultural ambassadors”, which allows us to think of these women in contexts where those distinctions carry less weight, viewing them as capable

of shaping foreign territories with their presence and their actions. At times, these actions were in tune with state directives and approaches, and at times they had an impact because of contingency and good fortune. As I have suggested, some of these women displayed a high degree of performativity when it came time to account for interests that may or may not have been in sync with the government's interest. The fact that they lived different lives than their countrywomen, in turn, allowed these women to acquire forms of knowledge and social ability that differentiated them and placed them at the centre of attention, both in their countries of origin and in their international diplomatic destinations.

In summary, I hope that by presenting a literature review and organising the subject of women in diplomacy by topic area and analytical or interpretive approach, this chapter can serve as an invitation to further studies about other regions, so that we can continue to map the broad and transnational space through which these women moved and lived.

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