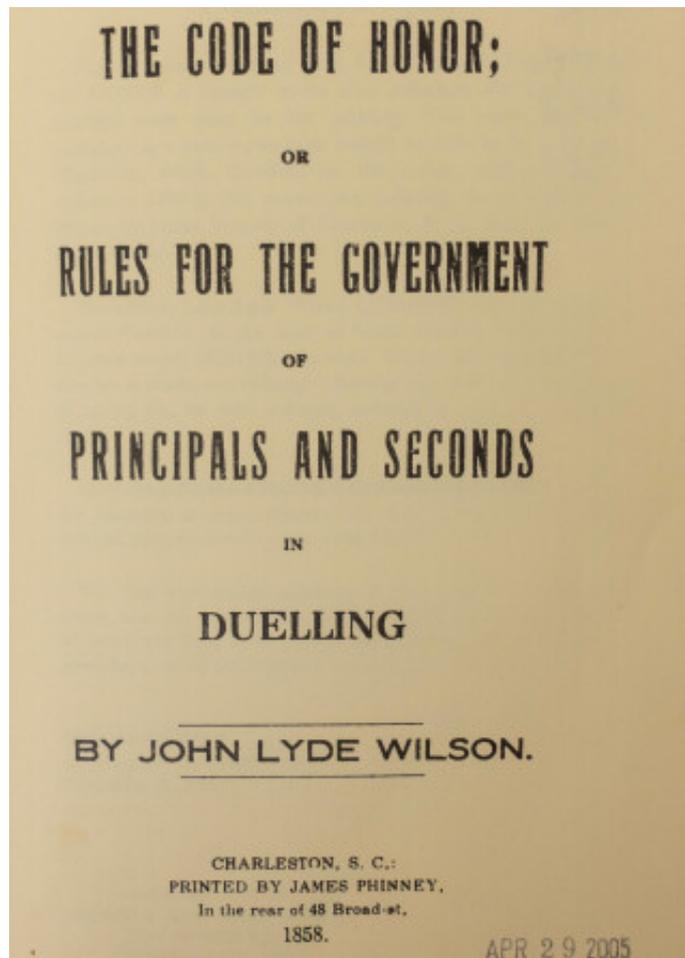


Once and Future: The Duel

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Currently on view in the Law Library for the Fall, 2019, semester is *The Duel in History: Laws, "Codes," and Censure*. The Law Library's first exhibition on the legal history of dueling appeared in 2005, drawn from an article by Jennie Meade which appeared in the Fall, 2005, issue of *GW Law School Magazine*. Since then, the Law Library has dramatically increased its holdings on dueling. So a follow-up exhibition to display some of the more recently-acquired works seemed to be in order.

The thirteen books displayed in the current exhibition include works from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. They shed light on the duel's evolution from a legal means of deciding disputes between two people – the judicial duel, or trial by combat – to the duel of honor, an extrajudicial means of settling private matters unregulated by law: matters of honor and insult.



A deep-rooted practice in both European and American culture, the duel withstood a centuries-long attack by ecclesiastical and legal authorities until it declined toward the end of the nineteenth century in the wake of the Civil War and shifts in the social culture. The works on display include “how-to” manuals of dueling etiquette and procedure, anti-dueling laws issued by several monarchs of France, a nineteenth-century image of women dueling, and several examples of ecclesiastical criticism and calls to end the practice. Also included are several works of classic jurists – Blackstone, Beccaria, and Grotius – who voiced their opinions on dueling, its legality, its control, and imaginative ways to use it (Grotius offered that instead of going to war, states could designate champions to duel, thereby deciding the conflict and saving many lives).

Two swords are featured as embellishments to the exhibition. One is an American ceremonial sword from the 1930s, the other is a Civil War-era sword. Both are on loan from generous members of the Law School staff.



Today, in place of a challenge to duel, American courts offer the option of a lawsuit for defamation. But the notion of dueling dies hard; in October, 2002, the vice president of Iraq drew upon the ideas of Grotius when he suggested that the presidents and vice presidents of the United States and Iraq engage in a pistol duel to settle the problems then leading to war (Shuy, *The Language of Defamation Cases* (Oxford University Press, 2010)). Grotius had looked back to a medieval device – the trial by combat – to resolve seventeenth-century problems. Iraq resurrected the notion in the twenty-first.

The Duel in History runs through January, 2020. Soon thereafter, the exhibition will move to our *Online Exhibitions* page at https://law.gwu.libguides.com/exhibits?group_id=14689



***The Duel in History: Laws, “Codes,” and Censure* presents the following works:**

Recueil des Edits (1689)

https://wrlc-gwalaw.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GWALAW/11jeo7j/alma991001460029704112_

Le Combat de Mytio Ivstinopolitain (1583)

https://wrlc-gwalaw.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GWALAW/11jeo7j/alma991001543129704112

La Ivstification dv Seignevr Richard de Merode (1560)

https://wrlc-gwalaw.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GWALAW/11jeo7j/alma991006133499704112

Le Saint Concile de Trente (1674)

https://wrlc-gwalaw.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GWALAW/11jeo7j/alma991000360709704112

The Burgundian Code (modern translation, 1972)

https://wrlc-gwalaw.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GWALAW/11jeo7j/alma991001883159704112

De Jure Belli Ac Pacis (1650)

https://wrlc-gwalaw.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GWALAW/11jeo7j/alma991001931769704112

Commentaries on the Laws of England (1765-1769)

https://wrlc-gwalaw.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GWALAW/11jeo7j/alma991005572179704112

Dei Delitti e Delle Pene (1764)

https://wrlc-gwalaw.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GWALAW/11jeo7j/alma991001119739704112

The Code of Honor (1858)

https://wrlc-gwalaw.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GWALAW/11jeo7j/alma991002512839704112

A Tract on Duelling (1790)

https://wrlc-gwalaw.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GWALAW/11jeo7j/alma991000434309704112

The Remedy for Duelling (1809)

https://wrlc-gwalaw.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GWALAW/11jeo7j/alma991001897009704112

Speeches of the Hon. Samuel Prentiss, of Vermont (1838)

https://wrlc-gwalaw.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GWALAW/11jeo7j/alma991000417859704112