SATIRE AND THE LIE OF POLITICS: *EL MONO* (MÉXICO, 1833)

SÁTIRA Y LA MENTIRA DE LA POLÍTICA: *EL MONO* (MÉXICO, 1833)

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Abstract

El Mono was a short-lived conservative satirical newspaper in Mexico that, in 1833, consistently attacked the liberal government of Valentín Gómez Farías. Sustained by a mode of satire that it drew from an Italian 1749 satirical novel, El Mono's editors undermined the conceptual foundations of liberal politics: popular sovereignty, public opinion and political action. Ultimately, for the editors, liberal politics responded neither to logic nor rational ideas, but to private vices. Thus, they held that the only stable grounds for society was morality, tradition and custom. This paper shows how this critique was developed through the use of Juvenalian satire.

Keywords

Zavaleta Agreements, Conservatism, Satire

Resumen

El Mono fue un semanario mexicano conservador que, en 1833, atacó consistentemente el gobierno liberal de Valentín Gómez Farías. A partir de un modo satírico que tomó de una novela italiana, El Mono criticó los cimientos de la política liberal: la soberanía popular, la opinión pública y la acción política. Sus editores insistieron que la política liberal no respondía a la razón, sino a vicios privados. Por ello, los únicos basamentos estables para la sociedad debían ser la moral, la tradición y la costumbre. Este trabajo muestra cómo esta crítica dependió del uso de la sátira juvenaliana.

Palabras Clave

Acuerdos de Zavaleta, conservadurismo, sátira

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On December 21st 1832, the belligerent parties of a year-long armed conflict met outside of Puebla in the Hacienda de San José de Zavaleta, in order to put an end to a war that had become too costly. There, *pronunciados* Antonio de Santa Anna, Miguel Ramos Arizpe, Bernardo González Angulo and Manuel Gómez Pedraza met with the government's acting executive, Vice President Anastasio Bustamante and his military advisors and, after two days of secret negotiations, signed an agreement to "pacify" the nation. Politically, the Plan or Agreements of Zavaleta had three immediate consequences. First, it deposed what retrospectively could be called Mexico's first conservative government (1830-1832), led by Bustamante and counseled by Lucas Alamán[1]. Secondly, it named Gómez Pedraza as interim president. Thirdly, it called for new elections to be held in March 1833. Yet these actions were considered secondary to an ostensibly higher purpose: the restitution of the legitimacy of the Constitution of 1824. According to the authors of the agreements, Gómez Pedraza and Santa Anna, this legitimacy had been undermined years before when the results of the 1828 elections, in which the former emerged as the president-elect, had been annulled following an insurgency, in which the latter participated. After Gómez Pedraza's removal, the defeated candidate, radical proto-populist Vicente Guerrero, assumed the nation's executive office and led the government through two turbulent years that resulted in his eventual ouster by his own Vice President, Anastasio Bustamante in 1831. For the next two years, Bustamante effectively spearheaded Mexico's transition from federalism to centralism through the backdoor, without altering the foundational document—his ministers reformed the electoral system, took control of Congress, censored the press, strengthened the Roman Catholic Church, and intruded on states' jurisdiction, to name the most prominent of his opponents' grievances[2]. It was then that Santa Anna became concerned with the restitution of constitutional legitimacy and launched the insurgency that concluded in the outskirts of Puebla. Taking a hard turn in the opposite direction, the government inaugurated by the Zavaleta Agreements was to be, by any account, the most radical Mexico had seen up until that point.

On February 26 1833, four days after now-president Gómez Pedraza enforced a decree to expel the remaining Spanish citizens left in Mexico –a move popular among the masses– Tomás Uribe y Alcalde's printing house published the first issue of the satiric weekly *El Mono* (February 1833-June 1833). Its cover was adorned by an irreverent vignette that would soon offend those in power and subsequently be censored, but which set the tone for

[1] In this paper, I prefer "conservative sensibilities" over conservatism. See William Fowler and Humberto Morales Moreno, "Introducción: Una (re)definición del conservadurismo mexicano del siglo diecinueve", in *El conservadurismo mexicano en el siglo XIX (1810-1910)*, edited by William Fowler and Humberto Morales Moreno (Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1999), 11-26. Fowler and Morales argue that the concepts of "conservatism" or "conservative" did not refer to the realm of the political until the late 1840s, when politicians such as Alamán began to self-identify as such and founded a Conservative Party. When it was used in the second half of the 1830s, it was only so as to refer to ethical and moral commitments.

[2] Michael. P. Costeloe, *The Central Republic in Mexico, 1835-1846: "Hombres de bien" in the age of Santa Anna,* Cambridge Latin American Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 38-39.

what would become a popular Catholic satirical newspaper, infamous for its acerbic critique of liberalism, republicanism and the very idea of political legitimacy. Atop the paper's nameplate, stood "a monkey with his rifle, a sheet of paper in his hand which is, according to the latest fashion, his *Pronunciamiento* and the constitution on his tail, so as to teach us that any insurgent monkey must hold on to it; but once the pronunciamiento has been achieved, it is of little importance to comply with it [the constitution] or to break it, and that is why they will put it to their rear"[3]. A rifle, a *pronunciamiento*, and the constitution were all brought together by a creature that, despite being manlike, was not quite capable of independent thought. In this essay, I survey the publication so as to show that its pages represent a key instance in the development of the conservative sensibilities of those that previous scholars have referred to as *hombres de bien*[4]. Along with its contemporary *La verdad desnuda*, which was very likely produced by the same anonymous editors, *El Mono* inaugurated an unapologetic tone and a use of satire that would later be taken up by conservative papers such as *La lima de vulcano* (1833-1837), *El mosquito mexicano* (1834-1839), and even *El Universal*, the most important conservative paper of the following decade[5]. Thus, *El Mono* represents an early iteration of the powerful critical stance with which future conservatives questioned the legitimacy of (liberal) politics and the political in the period between 1848 and 1853[6].

El Mono's masthead –a monkey– was not just a political animal: it was also

[3] All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. "Prospecto", *El Mono*, Feb. 26, 1833, 3. In the original: "un mono con su fusil, un pliego de papel en la mano que es su Pronunciamiento, según la última moda, y la constitución en la cola, para enseñarnos que de ella debe agarrarse todo mono que se pronuncie; pero logrado el pronunciamiento es cosa de pequeña importancia cumplirla o quebrantarla, y por eso se la ponen a la trasera."

[4] Scholars such as Costeloe, Fowler and Morales use "hombre de bien" to refer to the property-holding elite which, in the first decades of independence, whatever their political ideology, believed, first and foremost, in the sanctity of property, in the danger of social dissolution as represented by democratization, and in a strong government as the bulwark of material safety and political stability. See Fowler and Morales, "Introducción"; Costeloe, *The Central Republic*; and William Fowler, "Dreams of stability: Mexican political thought during the 'Forgotten Years'. An analysis of the beliefs of the creole intelligentsia (1821-1853)", in *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 14/3 (United Kingdom 1995): 287-312.

[5] *La Lima* and *El mosquito* were printed in Tomás Uribe y Alcalde's press or in his relative's, José Uribe y Alcalde. Between 1828 and 1832, Tomás and José Uribe y Alcalde took over key Mexico City publishing houses. In the case of Tomás, during the years of 1828-1832, he managed printer Martín Rivera's shop, which had been responsible for publishing El Sol (supported by Lucas Alamán, who imported a British printing press for this purpose in 1822). Upon Rivera's return in 1831, Tomás founded his own, which seems to have been actively producing newspapers and pamphlets until about 1835. In 1829, José Uribe y Alcalde, on the other hand, came into ownership of the historic Imprenta de Ontíveros, upon the death of its namesake, and ran it until 1837. Interestingly, Martín Rivera's Press and the Imprenta de Ontíveros had been on opposite sides of the ideological spectrum with Rivera's accused of Bourbonism in the early years of the republic, and Ontíveros' known for its recalcitrant federalism. While it is hard to say it with certainty, it is very likely that the Uribe y Alcaldes shared the conservative sensibilities of the centralists. In *El comandante pareja* (1882), Enrique Olavarría y Ferrari insinuates that José Uribe y Alcalde mobilized his press as a mouthpiece for centralist president Miguel Barragán. One thing is for certain, though. All of the newspapers that came out of their respective offices in the aftermath of the Zavaleta Agreements -*La verdad desnuda*, *El Mono*, *El Toro, La lima de vulcano, El mosquito mexicano*- were of conservative sensibilities. For general information about the publications, see Miguel A. Castro and Guadalupe Curiel, *Publicaciones periódicas mexicanas del siglo XIX, 1822-1855: Fondo Antiguo de La Hemeroteca Nacional y Fondo Reservado de La Biblioteca Nacional de México* (México D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2000). For more on the Imprenta Ontíveros, see Manuel Suárez Rivera, *Dinastía de tinta y papel: Los Zúñiga Ontiveros en la cultura novohispana, 1756-1825* (México D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Bibliográficas, 2019), 159-173.

[6] In fact, on November 12, 1848, *El Universal* would republish an article from *El espectador sevillano* in which it was argued that satire was the only viable literary genre in a context where everything was absurd, a point that *El Mono* would make *and* stage, as will be seen below. The article is quoted in Elías J. Palti, *La invención de una legitimidad: razón y retórica en el pensamiento mexicano del siglo XIX: un estudio sobre las formas del discurso político* (Ciudad de México: FCE, 2005), 184.

a key figure of its literary conceit[7]. The weekly was sustained by the appropriation and adaptation of a 1749 novel by Italian Counter Enlightenment satirist Zaccaria Seriman (1708-1784) titled *Viaggi di Enrico Wanton alle terre incognite australi ed ai regni delle Scimmie e dei Cinocefali* (1749)[8]. In Seriman's original, much like Jonathan Swift's Gulliver, protagonist Enrico Walton travels to a land of monkeys and cynocephaluses, whereupon he launches into an extended account that offered a cynical portrait of contemporary mores and an inquiry into social morality. In *El Mono*, however, Walton is brought back to life and sent to Mexico to observe, critique, and improve the life of a nation in the midst of a political crisis. As they narrate in the "Prospecto", the anonymous editors of the publication, upon meeting the stranger, purportedly decide to found a paper to share with the public his critical insights. The Mexican Walton's main contention, throughout the life of the journal, is that, in the post-Zavaleta context, it is impossible to give any credence to either claims of political legitimacy or celebrations of the power of public opinion, two essential republican ideals. Thus, throughout the editors and Walton's satiric metadiscursive engagement with newspaper culture, both in print and in cafés, *El Mono* displayed the superficiality of liberal-republican reading practices, the corruption of newspapers, and the widespread immorality and hypocrisy that structured the newfound liberal regime. To attack what Walton saw as the destructive politics of radical republicans, the weekly republished texts from the past and present in which these very same republicans explained their own political views. The result was that figures such as Santa Anna, Manuel Gómez Pedraza, Ramos Arispe and Lorenzo Zavala themselves delegitimized their own and *current* political discourse. In that sense, the majority of the nineteen numbers of *El Mono* staged scenes of reading through which Walton's critical reading practice was exemplified. Ultimately, for Walton, such a reading of liberal discourse revealed how supposedly republican politics responded neither to logic nor rational ideas, but to convenience, personal gain, and private vices. This meant, for the editors, that it was impossible to ground society politically and that the only stable social foundations left were morality, tradition and custom –a commitment echoed by the *hombres de* bien that had supported Bustamante and would support the rise of centralism after 1835. As we will see, this project could only be developed through the deployment of a particular genre– Juvenalian satire. This form of satire's immanent logic structured

7 For the uses of animals in the newspaper culture of the nineteenth century, see Martha Isabel Gómez Guacaneme, *La fauna como símbolo de la prensa mexicana en los siglos XIX y XX* (México D.F.: UNAM-IIB, 2017).

8 The four-volumes of Seriman's novel were translated into Spanish under the title *Viajes de Enrique Wanton a las tierras incógnitas australes y al país de las monas; donde se expresan las costumbres, carácter, ciencias y política de estos extraordinarios habitantes...* A supplemental fifth volume was published in 1778. It must have met some success, seeing as Josécarlos Martínez García registers re-editions of the book in 1781-1785, 1800, 1831 and 1846. See Josecarlos Martínez García, "Un catálogo de utopías de la Ilustración Española", in *Cuadernos de Ilustración y Romanticismo* 14 (Cádiz 2006): 257-69. According to Susan Kiernan, each of the two parts of Seriman's novel has a different purpose. Where Wanton's travels to the dystopian Kingdom of the Apes was meant to serve as an outright satire of the Republic of Venice, Wanton's foray into the Realm of the Cynocephali was "more allegorical and by turns a utopian and sytopian fable with contemporary resonances" (63). See Suzanne Kiernan, "The exotic and the normative in Viaggi Di Enrico Wanton Alle Terre Australi Incognite by Zaccaria Seriman", in *Eighteenth-Century Life* 26/3 (Durham 2002): 58-77.

El Mono's critique and which, as a result of the newspaper's popularity and effectiveness, went on to become integral to future conservative discourse in Mexico.

I. Of monkeys and men: enter *El Mono*

El Mono's prospectus opens with a dramatic scene. Exhausted by the never-ending concatenation of "*pronunciamientos*, plans, motives, articles," the god Jupiter becomes angry and, to try to put an end to the conflict, decides to revive and transport Enrique Wanton, "that famous and diligent observer of the mores and customs of monkeys," to Mexico, hoping that he can help rehabilitate the private vices that are corroding the nation[9]. Waking up in his new reality, Wanton rages, flabbergasted by Jupiter's godly decision. He looks around himself, at the "millions" of public papers and newspapers titled "El Fénix, Registro Oficial, Telégrafo, Sol, Columna, Amigos del Pueblo, Duende, Marimba, Toro" and wonders what use is writing "there where everything is written about but customs never improve?"[10]. Uncertain, he describes the sort of paper he would write if he were to, indeed, be up to his divine task: a paper that would speak directly and ridicule Mexican "monkeys," and which would have, as its frontispiece, the rifle-holding ape holding the constitution in its tail described above. His articles, he says, would begin from a careful study of the 1824 Constitution, that "code that is considered sacred," which serves as the "common pretext for so many massacres and all the blood that is spilled annually"[11]. Quickly skimming the foundational document—the first performance of the critical reading practice that is thematized in the paper—, he realizes that the Constitution functions sort of like a "book of enigmas which each person understands and interprets as they like," and goes on to disparage those who make it into the grounding of the arguments[12]. Despite his opinions, which he contends would provide enough material for a newspaper's prospectus, Wanton confesses he lacks the motivation to put them to ink because it is, ultimately, pointless: public opinion is broken in Mexico.

Enter *El Mono*'s anonymous editors[13]. The plural first person narrators (we, the editors) step into Wanton's room and offer their services. Hesitantly, Wanton agrees. The editors ask what other topics should they tell readers that *El Mono* would include, but Wanton has no patience for the formalities of Mexican newspaper culture, and answers: "go ahead and

9 "Prospecto", *El Mono*, Feb. 26, 1833, 2. In the original, "…aquel célebre y diligentísimo observador de los usos y costumbres de los monos."

10 "Prospecto", *El Mono*, Feb. 26, 1833, 3. In the original, "…en donde todo el día se escribe y las costumbres jamás se mejoran?"

11 "Prospecto", *El Mono*, Feb. 26, 1833, 3. In the original, "…[c]ódigo a quien le dan el alto nombre de sagrado…" and "…pretesto común de tantas Matanzas y de toda la sangre que anualmente se derrama."

12 "Prospecto", *El Mono*, Feb. 26, 1833, 3. In the original, "…libro de los enigmas que cada uno lo entiende o interpreta según le da la gana…"

13 Rafael Rojas considers the possibility that the publication might have been authored by none other than Carlos María Bustamante (1774-1848). His conjecture is based on parallels in phrasing and tone in both *El Mono* and Bustamante's contemporaneous writings. While it is indeed possible, I would hold that another potential editor could have been the infamous Francisco Ibar, author of the papers titled *Muerte política de la República Mexicana* (1829) and *Regeneración política de la República Mexicana* (1830). Beyond stylistic, syntactic and political similarities, Ibar's papers coincide with *El Mono* in the fact that they shared a printer, Tomás Uribe y Alcalde, with whom Bustamante never worked before or after. Ibar's previous publications were, like *El Mono*, characterized by an acerbic tone that often veered into ad hominem attacks. Unfortunately, too little is known about Ibar to formalize this hypothesis in any straightforward manner. For Rojas' claim, see Rafael Rojas, *Los derechos del alma: ensayos sobre la querella liberal-conservadora en Hispanoamérica (1830-1870)* (México D.F.: Penguin Random House, 2014). Kindle Loc. 1090-1108.

promise the usual spiel that every paper promises…"[14]. The truth of the matter is that, if he is to speak of anything, it will be of "*pronunciamientos*, legitimacies and elections, those very same questions that have been preferred since independence"[15]. The editors then promise to find Wanton an audience, as long as their printing press does not suffer "a monkey assault"[16]. Despite acknowledging the possibility of censorship, they quickly dismiss it, and argue that "indeed, we do not expect [our critics to follow] such a proceeding [censorship] against which, during the previous administration, so much was said, because were that they to do so, it would allow it to be said that they are cut from the same cloth"[17]. Thus, the maiden issue of the publication establishes the first of its running motifs: the reluctant Wanton reads a document —the Constitution, in this case—, related to the protagonists of the Zavaleta Agreements or the current government, in a comparative and deeply historicized manner, and, prompted by the editors, shares his opinion. To show that his argument is not based on misinterpretation or partial reading, he cites relevant fragments of his primary source and comments on them, often referencing other texts written by the author in question to compare and contrast. Throughout these analyses, metadiscursive aspects of newspaper culture are integrated and, consequently, critiqued[18].

El Mono'*s* contempt for newspaper culture, which it associated with liberalism/republicanism and the troubles of 1832-1833, did not result from a strictly anti-intellectual perspective. In fact, it originated in a philosophical disagreement with public opinion understood as the conceptual foundation of republican politics, and which saw its most explicit material expressions in the press and the coffee houses of the period. As Elías Jose Palti has carefully explored, for its enthusiasts, public opinion as an institution presupposed the dissolution of transcendental truths and norms and, so, their effective immanentization and democratization[19]. The plurality and diversity of individual perceptions became a pre-requisite of politics for the liberals and republicans of the time. Palti writes, "*Error* no longer appears as opposed to *Truth*, but as its point of departure and its presupposition: just as the idea of a Truth makes debate possible, its relative opacity makes it [Error] necessary"[20]. For someone like Lorenzo de Zavala —one of *El Mono*'s enemies—, the political emerges precisely because of the opacity of Truth opens it up to the rhetorical field, of public debate[21]. As Palti summarizes, "that which lies outside public opinion (tradition) is pure anomie, the realm of mere belief

14 "Prospecto", *El Mono*, Feb. 26, 1833, 5. In the original, "…prometan ustedes la cantinela corriente que prometen todos los periódicos…".

15 "Prospecto", *El Mono*, Feb. 26, 1833, 6-7. In the original, "…pronunciamientos, legitimidades y elecciones, que han sido las materias esclusivas y predilectas desde que hizo la independencia".

16 "Prospecto", *El Mono*, Feb. 26, 1833, 6-7.

17 "Prospecto", *El Mono*, Feb. 26, 1833, 6-7. In the original, "bien que no esperamos semejante procedimiento contra el que se clamó tanto y tanto en la administración pasada, y sería dar lugar a que se dijera que era la propia geringa aunque con distinto palo".

18 This critique entailed everything from the economic liabilities of printers and publishers to Wanton's impatience with regards to genre norms (for example, the abovementioned dismissal of the formal requirements of a newspapers' "prospectus").

19 Palti, *La invención*…, 79.

20 Palti, *La invención*…, 79. In the original, "[e]l *Error* aparece ya no como lo opuesto a la *Verdad*, sino como su punto de partida y su presupuesto: así como la idea de una Verdad hace el debate posible, sólo su relativa oscuridad vuelve a éste necesario".

21 Palti, *La invención*…, 80.

(doxas), prediscursive and prepolitical by definition"[22]. For liberals, then, it was precisely a subject's participation in the common enterprise of the discernment of truth –and of norms and values– which transformed him from vassal into citizen[23]. *El Mono*'s editors did not buy into this idealization of public deliberation. In fact, they were convinced that history showed that these democratic procedures led only to chaos and anarchy. Yet, their criticism of liberal politics went even further. As we will see later, they would argue that even the standardbearers of liberalism themselves did not subscribe to the purported functioning of public opinion.

The following issue of *El Mono* introduces a second motif. One evening, Wanton tells the editors it is time to go out into the streets, tired of being locked up simply reading liberal papers ("Fenix y Columnas"), which dedicate page after page to reviewing "those annoying repetitions with which they tried to prove the legitimacy of their monkey's presidency: legitimacy that not even they themselves believe and with which they have uselessly soiled so many reams of paper…"[24]. Asked where they should go, Wanton suggests they go "the place where national sovereignty resides"[25]. The editors confess they do not know where national sovereignty resides, and Wanton smirks: "a coffeehouse, there national sovereignty resides, that is, according to the latest practical lessons that we have received in México, Valladolid, and other locations"[26]. The coffee house goes on to serve as one of the main settings of the fictional scenes that frame the paper's articles[27]. From then on, most issues begin with a visit to the coffeehouse whereupon either Wanton or the editors start a conversation with about a dozen or so "monkeys" —republican and radical dilettantes eager for yet another revolt or a debate about constitutional legitimacy. These conversations are often presented in the form of dialogues, a genre which, as Ozuña Castañeda has detailed, theatricalized the procedures of a deliberative assembly and lent itself to be read out loud in public spaces[28]. So, on the one hand, *El Mono* brought its formal and generic dispositions into its diegesis, often commenting on the innerworkings of newspapers; and, on the other, it integrated and thematized scenes of its production, circulation and reception. Via these scenes, the paper habilitated a critique liberalism which was mediated through the conventions of Juvenalian satire. This critique took place not only in terms of its content and ideas but of its forms—public opinion and the political discourse.

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22 Palti, *La invención*…, 88. In the original, "[l]o que yace por fuera de la opinión pública (la tradición) es la pura anomia, el reino de las meras creencias (doxas), prediscursivas y prepolíticas, por definición.

23 Palti, *La invención*…, 82.

24 *El Mono*, Mar. 1, 1833, 1. In the original, "…aquellas fastidiosas repeticiones con que pretendieron probar la legitimidad a la presidencia de su mono: legitimidad que ni ellos mismos creen y con la que han ensuciado inútilmente tantas resmas de papel…".

25 *El Mono*, Mar. 1, 1833, 1. In the original, "…al lugar donde reside la soberanía de la nación."

26 *El Mono*, Mar. 1, 1833, 1. In the original, "…a un café, allí reside la soberanía de la nación, según las últimas lecciones prácticas que se nos dieron en México, en Valladolid y otros puntos".

27 *El Mono*, Mar. 1, 1833, 1.

28 Mariana Ozuna Castañeda, "Géneros menores y ficcionalidad en el periodismo de Fernández de Lizardi", in *Literatura Mexicana* 20/1 (Mexico D.F 2009): 10. In his *Memorias de mis tiempos*, Guillermo Prieto mentions *El Mono*, along with El Toro, when he reminisces about coffeehouse culture of the 1830s (103). See Guillermo Prieto, *Memoria de mis tiempos*. Vol. 1. (México: Tipografía de la Viuda de Francisco Díaz de León, 1906), 103.

II. Juvenal´s outrage: the political use of satire

The publication's slogan, "Ridendo corrigo mores," explicitly stated its satirical project[29]. Unsurprisingly, satire was anything but new in the Mexican public sphere, and had always held a close relationship to the political. More specifically, satire brought the political into the realm of morality. When it did so, it jettisoned the deliberative practices of public opinion, grounded as it was on a rhetoric of exemplarity, as Elías José Palti has written[30]. The satirist "did not seek to provide arguments to be debated in public, instead he sought to enlighten his audience with regards to the proper norms of social comportment"[31]. This disregard for deliberation is precisely what made the dialogue the preferred genre disposition of the great Mexican satirists of the age, from Fernández de Lizardi and Pablo de Villavicencio to *El Mono*[32]. The fictionalized dialogue made a gesture to the procedures of public opinion while negating any actual debate and validating the moralist conclusions of the satirist[33].

A comparison between Fernández de Lizardi and *El Mono* might be illustrative here. Both sought to correct the wayward mores of their contemporaries through laughter, yet their approaches differed drastically. Whereas the Fernández de Lizardi of, say, *El periquillo sarniento* (1816/1830) deployed a literary satirical gaze to shed light on the tenacious contradictions and vices of the *ancien régime* so as to articulate a national imaginary, *El Mono*'s target was the nouveau régime—the liberal government spawned in Zavaleta—, which was the result of loose morals and private vices[34]. They differed, as well, in the form of satire they deployed. Fernández de Lizardi "assume[d] militantly the Horatian maxim of *deletare aut prodesse*"[35]. According to M.H Abrams' classic definition of satire, in Horatian satire, "the speaker manifests the character of an urbane, witty, and tolerant man of the world, who is moved more often to wry amusement than to indignation at the spectacle of human

29 "Ridendo corrigo mores" had an expansive Western history. See Edward Wright-Rios, *Searching for Madre Matiana: prophecy and popular culture in modern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014), 167-168, 329. Wright-Ríos has traced how variations of this slogan appeared in French newspapers and other Latin American publications of the 1830s and 1840s. In France, it was employed by liberal reformers "to discipline [the July Monarchy's] political leaders through ridicule, conceived of as a tool to broaden political participation during monarchical rule." Likewise, it would be used in Mexico by the liberal satirical press after 1850, thereafter integrating it into "legacy of reformism grounded in notions that top-down cultural transformation represented a crucial step toward prosperous nationhood." Before that happened, though, it was yet another tool to be sharpened in *El Mono*'s illiberal assault. If we take Guillermo Prieto's remembrance of *El Mono* amongst the key papers discussed in the coffeehouses of the 1830s, it would not be unrealistic to assume that the liberal press lifted the slogan from *El Mono*.

30 Palti, *La invención*…, 80.

31 Palti, *La invención*…, 80.

32 Just three years before in 1830-1831, the Imprenta Galván had re-edited the 181 satirical tour-de-force that was Fernández de Lizardi's *El periquillo sarniento*.

33 Taking his hypothesis that it was authored by Carlos María Bustamante as a starting point, Rafael Rojas reads *El Mono* as an example of an antireformist republicanism that often bordered on a corporate antiliberalism that defended the rights and jurisdiction of Church and Army. For him, even though the paper is split between these two positions, its republicanism shines through. Thus, my argument takes its distance from Rojas' in that it contends that, within the paper's diegesis, the satiric position undoes this supposed split. The overtures to republican values are there to undermine them from within. See Rojas, *Los derechos del alma*…; Loc. 1108-1115.

34 Gerardo F. Bobadilla Encinas, "Sátira y nación en la novela mexicana del siglo XIX. El caso de El Periquillo Sarniento de José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi", in *América. Cahiers Du CRICCAL* 37 (Paris 2008): 127.

35 Mariela Insúa, ed, *Noches tristes y día alegre. Vida y hechos del famoso caballero don Catrín de la Fachenda* (Madrid: UNED, 2013), 20.

folly, pretentiousness, and hypocrisy"[36]. John Drew expands this classical definition, by explaining that, "[l]ike Horace, the former army officer turned Treasury civil servant in the post-Civil War Rome of Augustus and Maecenas, the Horatian satirist reforms the Establishment from a site on the margins of, or fully within, the establishment"[37]. *El Mono*, on the other hand, privileged the mode of Juvenal, the bitter satirical poet exiled by an emperor for insulting a member of his coterie[38]. The speaker of Juvenalian satire is an outraged moralist that, standing outside the circuits of power, decries "modes of vice and error which are no less dangerous because they are ridiculous"[39]. The Juvenalian satirist's corrosive critique does not seek to correct through entertainment, but to "evoke from readers contempt, moral indignation, or an unillusioned sadness at the aberrations of humanity"[40]. Put differently, "[w]here evil, rather than folly, is detected, it needs rooting out, so the Juvenalian satirist has few scruples over *ad hominem attacks*"[41]. Mediated through its appropriation of Seriman's Juvenalian *Viaggi di Enrico Wanton*, where an otherworldly speaker is dropped into a world of vice and, fully taking advantage of his otherness, attacks it viciously, *El Mono* relished its radical otherness in the face of rising liberalism and went out of its way to shame and humiliate the "monkeys" ruining Mexico. In this sense, the only audience whose mores it sought to correct through laughter was composed, not of Jacobin monkeys, but of those moderates still on the fence vis-à-vis the Zavaleta Agreements. If it sought to propagate any imaginary whatsoever, it was a Catholic and proto-bourgeois imaginary of the *hombre de bien*. Yet it did so while completely disillusioned with the functioning of the political.

El Mono's satiric position regarding 1833 México is transparent. In México, they write, it is extremely difficult to tell men from monkeys, "because in this country monkeys imitate men so perfectly, and many of these imitate monkeys so naturally that it is difficult to distinguish one from the other"[42]. This is further complicated by the fact that, according to Enrique, "almost all the republic's inhabitants write, speak and debate with the confidence of a man; but act like monkeys"[43]. This is precisely the origin of all of the ills of late and the reason behind the nation's lack of progress towards "Happiness and the aggrandizement to which it is called by nature…"[44]. Take, as an example, citizen Capulín, the first monkey met by Wanton upon his inaugural visit to the coffee house in the weekly's second issue (dated March 1st, 1833). Capulín is, in a way, one of publication's protagonists as well as the recurrent butt of most of *El*

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36 M.H. Abrams, *A glossary of literary terms*, 7th ed. (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999), 276.
37 John Drew, "Dickens, miscellanies, and classical traditions of satire", *Dickens Quarterly* 34/3 (Aarhus 2007): 225-226.
38 Drew, "Dickens, Miscellanies…" 226.
39 Abrams, *A Glossary*…, 276-277.
40 Abrams, *A Glossary*…, 277.
41 Drew, "Dickens, Miscellanies…," 226.
42 *El Mono*, Mar. 4, 1833, 1. In the original, "…porque en este país los monos remedan con tanta perfección a los hombres, y muchos de estos imitan con tanta naturalidad a los monos, que es dificil distinguir a unos y a otros".
43 *El Mono*, Mar. 4, 1833, 1. In the original, "…casi todos los habitantes de la república escriben, hablan y discurren con el acierto de un hombre; pero obran como monos".
44 *El Mono*, Mar. 4, 1833, 1. In the original, "…la Felicidad y engrandecimiento a la que la llama la naturaleza…".

Mono's jokes. His only occupation "was reduced to squandering the large fortune that he inherited from his parents"[45]. Fan of *pronunciamientos*, he was always "dispuesto a entrar en todos y a dejarse despojar de sumas de pesos si le daban o le decían que le habían dado algún lugar en ellos"[46]. Some time before, Capulín had served as senator in Toluca, and of this public service it could only be said that he now had "a very distinguished vote in the cafes, where you could always find him disputing whatever came his way without understanding a word on any matter"[47]. If we take Capulín as standard-bearer of the average monkey-liberal, we see that, for Wanton, the danger lies in these ridiculous individuals who, not being of popular extraction, squander the riches (and education) accumulated by previous generations in supporting radical causes without the proper understanding of the situation. Gullible and eager for the newest thing, Capulín, like all monkeys, confuses disruption for politics and so is open to any and all discourse that affirms his own.

III. A conservative reading practice

After "reading" the prospectus put out by the editors of *El Mono*, and believing it to be an "opposition paper," Capulín approaches Wanton and directly asks him if he believes Gómez Pedraza's presidency is legitimate. Wanton's answer is conclusive: Gómez Pedraza is an illegitimate usurper. But not because he has taken power from Bustamante through the Agreements, but because his claim to legitimacy, the election of 1828, was widely known, back then, to have been illegal and corrupt, seeing as he engaged in vote-buying, among many other immoral practices. Despite this answer, for Wanton, the legitimacy of Gómez Pedraza is beside the point. His argument's main purpose is not to engage in the debate directly, but to bring Santa Anna, Gómez Pedraza's ally in the Agreements, as his own witness. His audience laughs in disbelief, and Capulín shoots back that he is more likely to believe that the "sun does not shine" than to question Santa Anna's integrity[48]. Wanton thereupon reaches into his pocket for a printed paper, hands it over to Capulín, and asks him to read the seventh paragraph. Titled, "Proclama del general Santa Anna contra los gachupines" [General Santa Anna's Proclamation against the gachupines]" and dated 1829, the document dates from Santa Anna's early support of Guerrero in the aftermath of the 1828 election. In the paragraph in question, the general accuses Gómez Pedraza of being scheming and ambitious, along with being at the service of a cabal of rich Spaniards who bankrolled his election. Having heard the contents, other monkeys eagerly asks to read the paper. Wanton distributes it gladly, without fearing any retribution for he did not author them[49]. Soon enough, "the papers flowed from hand to hand",

45 *El Mono*, Mar. 1, 1833, 1. In the original, "…se reducía a dilapidar un cuantioso caudal que heredó de sus padres".
46 *El Mono*, Mar. 1, 1833, 2.
47 *El Mono*, Mar. 1, 1833, 2. In the original, "…un voto muy distinguido en los cafés, donde siempre se le encontraba disputando de cuanto se ofrecía sin entender palabra en materia alguna".
48 *El Mono*, Mar. 1, 1833, 4.
49 *El Mono*, Mar. 1, 1833, 7.

and Wanton had successfully completed his mission[50]. In the last page of that March 1st issue, he sets up a similar scene that will take place two installments later, on March 8, by pledging to publish an 1829 paper authored by Lorenzo Zavala[51]. Wanton explains that this paper includes an argument from Zavala which claims that if Gómez Pedraza's presidency was ever considered legitimate, then those involved in the Acordada Revolt and which had removed Gómez Pedraza from office were to be punished with force[52]. This meant, according to Wanton's account of Zavala's reasoning, that characters such as Santa Anna, who had revolted against the government, had to be executed[53].

Before this promise, however, the editors narrate the effect in the coffee house audience of reading Santa Anna's paper, which is worth quoting in full:

> "… some said that those things should no longer be brought forward or be reassessed, as their time had passed, and the current circumstances were very diverse: others replied that it was always useful to remember and keep in view the expressions made to the people, especially those delivered by the characters who have taken center stage on the political scene, because only in this way can it be known if they stand by the fixed and invariable principles they preach to the public opinion, or if, on the contrary, despising [public opinion] absolutely, they make it in the toy of their passions or whims, presenting us the facts and implementing doctrines in the way that best fit their ambition and aspirationalism. Others, regardless of this matter, saw the question from another perspective and exclaimed: it is impossible that there will ever be a sincere reconciliation and a pure friendship between Santa Anna, Pedraza and Zavala, and the country will always be a victim either of their declared hatreds, or of their simulated reconciliations. Blood and death when they were enemies: blood and death when friends; and once today's fatal and feigned union that falls apart, which may be very soon, their own blood; and, finally, others said: at the time these papers [shown by Wanton] were published, we were *pedracistas* of good faith…. We could have never imagined that he [Gómez Pedraza] would join with Zavala, Santa Anna, Zerecero, Salgado, and many others who are justifiably banned by the nation, and that forgetting the cloth from which they are cut, he would put himself under their shameful and ridiculous tutelage. How could we foresee that his relinquishment would reach such a stage, that he would subject himself to obeying such subjects?"[54].

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50 *El Mono*, Mar. 1, 1833, 7. In the original, "…[l]os impresos corrían de mano en mano".

51 The document in question is Lorenzo Zavala *Manifiesto Del Gobernador del Estado de México: Ciudadano Lorenzo de Zavala* (Ciudad de México: Impr. del gobierno, 1829).

52 *El Mono*, Mar. 1, 1833, 8.

53 Wanton's account misrepresents the content of Zavala's paper. While it is true that Zavala detailed the line of reasoning quoted above, he was actually explaining, in free indirect discourse, the logic that motivated Deputy Juan de Dios Cañedo, an opposition politician that sought to undermine the Guerrero government. See *El Mono*, Mar.8, 1833, 2-3.

54 *El Mono*, Mar. 1, 1833, 8. In the original: "…unos decían que ya no debía suscitarse ni reordenarse aquellas especies, pues había pasado su tiempo, y las circunstancias eran muy diversas: otros contestaban que siempre era útil recordar y tener a la vista las manifestaciones que se han hecho a los pueblos, principalmente por los primeros personages que han figurado en la escena política, pues solo de esta suerte podrá conocerse si caminan por unos principios fijos e invariables en la dirección que quieren dar a la opinión pública, o si por el contrario, despreciando a esta absolutamente, la convierten en el juguete de sus pasiones o caprichos, pintándonos los hechos y aplicando las doctrinas del modo que mejor cuadre a su ambición y aspirantismo. Otros prescindiendo de esta cuestión veían la cosa por otro punto y esclamaban: es imposible que haya jamás una reconciliación sincera y una Amistad pura entre Santa Anna, Pedraza y Zavala, y siempre la patria será víctima, o de sus odios declarados, o de sus reconciliaciones simuladas. Sangre y mortandad cuando eran enemigos: sangre y mortandad para hacerse amigos; y la propia sangre cuando se rompa, que acaso será muy pronto, la fatal y fingida unión que hoy aparentan; y otros por ultimo deçian: nosotros en la época de estos papeles éramos

With the exception of the first reaction, which dismisses the uses of historicism and argues for the complete alterity of the present, the other three rejoinders are not really opposed to each other. In fact, taken cumulatively, they exteriorize the goals of *El Mono*'s critical reading practice. To begin, for the editors, it is only through reading an influential figure's previous statements, that a citizen can ascertain their commitment to their stated politics. Any deviation between past and present statements can reveal that, rather than being motivated by political ideals, such subjects' actions respond, in fact, to private vices—passion, caprice, and ambition. Secondly, if this is, in fact, the case, then a reader has to question the value of such a subject's words and actions, for it would mean that they are willing to subject a nation to war in their pursuit of their private interests. Finally, if the reader happened to support such a subject in the past, the contrast between those statements which originally undergirded this support and their present actions should inevitably lead to a therapeutic "desengaño" or coming-to-their-senses which corrects their position. As Wanton puts it elsewhere, his goal is to labor in favor of truth, "[n]aked truth, Mr. Capulín, the one and only sovereign of nations, and from where that Happiness that everybody aspires to can originate. With that end, I have shed light on the lies and contradictions of Santa Anna, Pedraza and Zavala"[55]. Having paid attention, Capulín cedes to the stranger and agrees that "it is impossible to conciliate their writings with their acts: they have lived and will continue to live always in contradiction with each other and with themselves"[56].

To summarize, the critical reading practice proposed in the weekly and performed through its issues effectively undermines those claims forwarded by the standard-bearers of liberalism; it is revealed that the center of their supposed political ideals does not hold[57]. If the reader takes time to engage with the texts produced by these very same standard-bearers and puts them to task, they are bound to discover that the political collapses upon itself and reveals the arbitrariness of an individual's desires. Capulín would come to understand this later, in the May 25th, 1833 issue. When Enrique asks him if he has figured out the means through which liberalism grows, the reformed monkey, having learned to approach liberal politics not through its stated or philosophical goals but through the materiality of their actions, answers: "By the bayonet: only and absolutely by it and for no reason"[58].

unos pedracistas de buena fe…. Jamás se nos pudo venir a la cabeza que se adunara con Zavala, Santa Anna, Zerecero, Salgado, y otros muchos, justamente proscriptos por la nación, y que olvidando la tal fibra, se constituyera él mismo en un vergonzoso y ridículo pupilage. ¿Cómo podríamos prever que llegase a tal estremo su abandono, que se alistara a la obediencia de tales sugetos?"

55 *El Mono*, Mar. 12, 1833, 2.

56 *El Mono*, Mar. 12, 1833, 2.

57 This reading practice yields, in later issues, an analytic that is deployed indirectly in scenes that do not include explicit reference to published papers. A running gag of the issues of March 8th and 12th, for example, is Capulín's interest in carrying out a *pronunciamiento*, for which he hopes to recruit Wanton. Through his attempts, both the monkey and Wanton engage with the discursive structure of pronunciamientos, poking fun at it, its contradictions, redundancies, and justifying their effective deconstruction of what they consider a genre with reference to their historical consequences. Similarly, on the issue of April 26th, the coffee house monkeys theatricalize the war that led up to the Zavaleta Agreements, with different monkeys representing the relevant historical figures. After the play concludes, the editors analyze a war that, like Santa Anna's published text and pronunciamientos, responded to caprice and vanity rather than the purported defense of the legitimacy of the 1824 Constitution. See *El Mono*, Mar.8th, 1833, 1-4; *El Mono* Mar.12, 1833, 1-4; and *El Mono* April 26th, 1833, 1-4.

58 *El Mono*, May 25th, 1833, 2. In the original, "Por la bayoneta: absolutamente por ella y por ninguna otra cosa".

That is, for *El Mono*, what hides behind the lie of politics —and is revealed through Wanton's reading practice— is nothing but private vices and destructive force.

El Mono further documented the falsity of their opponents' commitment to liberty and the violence of their ways by integrating and directly addressing in its pages the censorship it faced. In fact, its vignette —the rifle-holding monkey— was immediately yet quietly suppressed after its first edition. No mention of its glaring disappearance was made until the sixth issue, on March 19th, when a letter to the editors —the only in the publication's life— was published. Yet, on March 12th, the editors had already begun to narratively address the matter of liberalism's vindictive censors. The number opens by explaining how, one morning, upon arriving to the café, Capulín and all the other monkeys explicitly avoided Wanton and the editors. Eventually, Wanton finds out that Capulín has been threatened by party officials for seriously considering his provocations. Before that happened, however, the panicked editors were briefly struck by an immense fear: "without the slightest doubt these damned monkeys have denounced us: Pedraza already knows who we, the editors, are; and who is Wanton and ho the whole dance goes"[59]. If this was indeed the case, "a jail cell is the least of our worries: we will be turned in to the *libres* and there we will experiment their great liberty to abuse of freedom of the press laws. That is why, without a doubt, they have fixed the jurors' list and, from what we have been told, all who buy and read *El Mono* have been purged"[60]. That is, between one joke and another, the editors addressed the actual reason for their anxiety: the press jury, a municipal body that addressed complaints of subversive, slanderous or immoral publications, had been purged of any member partial to *El Mono*[61]. This meant that any liberal complaint against their publication could very likely result in its suspension and the arrest or even conviction of its publisher. If in the first issue, the editors had dismissed the possibility of censorship by ironically referring to liberals' constant critique of the unjust workings of the abovementioned press jury during the previous administration, they immediately found out that their opponents' commitment to freedom of the press was not as steadfast.

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59 *El Mono*, Mar. 12, 1833, 2. In the original, "sin la menor duda ya estos malditos monos nos denunciaron: ya sabrá Pedraza quiénes somos los editores, quién Wanton y cómo anda toda la danza".

60 *El Mono*, Mar. 12, 1833, 1. In the original, "una prisión es lo menos que se nos espera: se nos entregará a los libres y allí esperimentaremos su grande libertad para quebrantar las leyes de imprenta. Por eso sin duda se hicieron las nuestras listas de jurados, y en ellas, según se nos ha dicho, se han omitido a todos los que compran o leen *El Mono*".

61 See Pablo Piccato, *The tyranny of opinion: honor in the construction of the Mexican public sphere* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 35-36. The press jury was reformed, for the first time in the post-independence period, in 1828. According to Pablo Picatto, "[m]unicipal authorities were to receive complaints against the press and present them before a nine-member jury drawn from a list of eligible citizens." This jury "decided the merits of the complaint, that is, whether the publication was indeed subversive, immoral, or slanderous. If that was the case, a lower-court criminal judge took over the process in order to suspend the sale of the publication and identify the person responsible for the article denounced. If the text was subversive, the judge had to arrest the suspect, and, in the case of an offense of private character, he had to prompt the victim and accused to reach a conciliation through a direct meeting. Once the intervention of the judge had concluded, and if the conciliation failed, a second, twelve-member jury (jurado de sentencia) met to sentence the accused; a minimum of eight votes were required to convict. Several provisions guaranteed the rights of the accused: he or she could post bail, speak at the jury audience, reject seven prospective jurors, and ask a judge to recuse the sentence... Thus organized, the press jury came to occupy a position between journalists and their victims and between municipal and judicial authorities".

In the letter to the editor that addressed the omission, its authors, who wrote under the pseudonyms Durazno and Sarmiento Deviña, complained about its absence and encouraged the editors to ignore any threat they might have encountered. The concerned readers reminded the editors that there was no *national* law against caricature. The only law on the books that prohibited such imagery belonged to Spanish legislation and had never been explicitly adopted nationally. They wrote: "neither monkeys nor men should suffer that tendency of being forced to apply laws that were crafted by those *tíos* so far from us and that have not been enacted here"[62]. Emboldened by the letter, the editors addressed the details of the suppression in the following issue. Dated March 22nd, the issue begins with Wanton avoiding the coffeehouse due to a threat on his person, before introducing the most radical of monkeys. In its last page, however, the editors break with the narrative and, in tight and smaller typeset stylistically different from the rest of the publication, explain that, immediately after the publication of *El Mono*'s first issue, "a man with hints and looks of authority appeared at the print shop, and cautioned our printer that to avoid suffering he should know that caricatures were prohibited by law"[63]. Worried that this might be the case, they had researched the matter and found out that, in fact, a broadside had been published by the interim governor of the district, José Mendivil, which read: "Under their own penalty and with the same progressive increase in case of recidivism, said cartoons and allusive drawings with advertisements for papers or insulting mastheads are prohibited etc"[64]. Yet, the editors argued that a broadside was not a law and that, either way, the matter of freedom of the press could only be addressed by Congress and, thus, the provision had no teeth. Their rifle-holding monkey was equivalent, they held, to the *Fénix de la Libertad*'s standard-bearing eagle, the only difference being that the latter publication had the current government's support. They concluded with an invitation to their readers to contact *El Mono*'s printer, Tomás Uribe y Alcalde, so as to persuade him to include the vignette in future issues. Whether readers did so or not, the rifle-bearing monkey would not reappear until the April 26th issue, and would proudly watch over its masthead for the entirety of the publication's five remaining issues.

If liberals could not be expected to be true to their word, if were so quick to betray their own principles so as to silence those who challenged them, then public opinion was ultimately useless. When the *Fénix de la Libertad* the accused *El Mono* of sedition March 7th, arguing that it had crossed the line between criticism of Lorenzo de Zavala and defamation, the editors of the latter chose simply not

62 *El Mono*, Mar. 19th, 1833, 8. In the original, "eso de querernos meter las leyes que allá hicieron aquellos tíos separados de nosotros y que no se promulgaron ni rigen, no la debemos sufrir ni los monos ni los hombres".

63 *El Mono*, Mar. 22, 1833, 8. In the original, "se apareció en la imprenta un señor con visos o asomos de autoridad, amonestando a nuestro impresor que para que no tuviera que sentir le advertía que las caricaturas estaban prohibidas por una ley".

64 *El Mono*, Mar. 22, 1833, 8. In the original, "Bajo la propia pena y con el mismo aumento progresivo en caso de reincidencia, se prohiben dichas caricaturas y dibujos alucivos con anuncios de papeles o rotulones insultantes &c".

65 *El Mono*, Mar. 12, 1833,8. In the original, "pleitos interminables, en que por lo común se olvidan los principios de una buena educación, desatándose en personalidades odiosas, injurias y sarcasmos".

to engage. They would neither confirm nor deny the accusations. Instead, in the same issue in which the press jury was addressed, they explained that the part of newspaper culture that interested them the least was getting involved in long lasting debates and wasting their columns on "endless lawsuits, in which usually the principles of good education are forgotten, unleashing odious personalities, insults and sarcasms"[65]. Thus, they "invited" all others newspapers to participate in an "accord of neutrality." They wrote: "write as much as you like and let us do the same... If we commit a criminal offense, there are judges and printing laws to us without the need for us to be harassing each other"[66]. They invited newspapers to ignore them and provoked its adversaries to channel any complaints or critiques not through tribunal of public opinion but through the legal apparatus, a move which would put liberals in the position of limiting their beloved ideal of freedom of the press[67]. Were their opponents to continue attacking the publication, *El Mono* promised to counterattack, yet it rarely did so. The paper continued to focus on undermining the administration's key figures and policies until the end of its run[68].

IV. Zavaleta's example

As we have seen, despite editing a public paper, the editors were ironically not interested in participating in the deliberative process that was supposed to beat at the center of the political, which, along with public opinion, they had shown to be a false idol. Engaging in rational debate with liberals was a mere distraction. Theirs, as we have seen, was only a fictionalized dialogue behind which beat a monologic satirical attack on the discursive foundations of the Zavaleta Agreements. For *El Mono*, exemplarity trumped deliberation and, as a result, morality and tradition trumped politics. The logic and rhetoric of exemplarity grounded its Juvenalian critiques and anything that strayed from the exemplary –the orderly and virtuous Catholic man of faith and property being the standard– opened itself to the caustic inquiry of its satiric gaze. Indeed, while the editors' opposition to the Zavaleta Agreements stemmed from an ideological disagreement, they argued that, by and by, what concerned them was the example it set. After the Agreements, they argued, all illegal attacks on established authorities could be excused by simply stating that the action had been carried out in imitation of President Gómez Pedraza: "This is how a servant would speak when rebuked by his master for a criminal and improper

66 *El Mono*, Mar. 12, 1833,8. In the original, "escriban cuanto quisieren y déjenos hacer lo mismo… Si delinquiéremos en algo, jueces y leyes de imprenta hay que nos corrijan sin necesidad de estarnos unos a otros zahiriéndonos".

67 It is illustrative to contrast *El Mono*'s policy of non-engagement with an ideologically aligned paper such as La antorcha. A daily, La antorcha was launched on April 1st 1833 and adopted the opposite route to *El Mono*. In its prospectus, it opened itself up to debate, informing readers that "si fuéremos impugnados con razones y no con sarcasmos e injurias, responderemos o nos daremos por convencidos." See *La antorcha*, April 1, 1833, 2. This willingness to participate in the deliberative processes of public opinion, and its daily schedule, explain why it quickly drew the attention of opposing papers such as El Fenix and, in less than a month, eclipsed *El Mono*.

68 *El Mono*, Mar. 12, 1833,8.

action that the latter had already carried out before: thus would a subject reply to his superior in the same case: thus would a son embarrass his father. Such are the dire effects of bad example"[69]. Zavaleta's example nullified the political legitimacy of government. It nullified whatever hold the Constitution of 1824 had once held. And, finally, it nullified the political as the domain on which liberalism founded itself. In their place, after Zavaleta, only anarchy and the realm of violence were left.

This constitutes the most sophisticated type of 'argumentation' elaborated by *El Mono* and leveled at the Zavaleta Agreements. Nevertheless, and as I am proposing here, the publication foreshadowed the key discursive developments that set the ground for the radical polarization that eventually drove a wedge in the political sphere. As Elías José Palti has shown, the following year of 1834 saw political debate begin to shift from the domain of the legitimacy of governments to the questioning of the institutive grounds of political legitimacy itself[70]. Once this shift was complete, "the problem seemed to escape from the realm of law to settle in that of pure facticity"[71]. In the case of *El Mono*, it is true that, as we have seen, the editors had not entirely abandoned the question of political legitimacy. That said, if their arguments were drawn to their logical conclusion, the editors would have necessarily been forced to realize that legitimacy no longer mattered. They did not support the fallen Bustamante regime only because it was legitimate. In fact, they never cared to make that argument. *El Mono* sought a return to the time before Zavaleta because, against Vicente Guerrero's political excess –or, what is the same in this case, the excess of the political–, the Bustamante government attempted to bring about an ordered society run by and in the name of the *hombres de bien* and their values. So it was that, despite their distaste for insurrections, in their last issue, on June 5th, they seemed to embrace the realm of violence which, according to them, liberals had been freely embracing since 1828. The editors wrote and celebrated the Anti-Federalist revolts that had broken out in recent weeks against the men of Zavaleta, who "preach reforms, and don't know morality in the slightest"[72]. These revolts were inevitable if one considered "the audacity and contempt with which the authorities of the church, the clergy, and the doctrines of the councils are treated"; "in the face of such behavior, a reaction was inevitable: surprisingly, the revolution did not break out before"[73].

In the long run, *El Mono*'s own "accord of neutrality", with which they justified their disentanglement with the processes of public opinion, backfired. Yet, in a sense, its denouement was nothing short of a pyrrhic victory. By April 1833,

69 *El Mono*, Mar. 5, 1833, 7. In the original, "Así hablaría un criado cuando fuera reconvenido por su amo, por una acción criminal e indecorosa que el segundo hubiera ejecutado antes que el primero: así contestaría un súbdito a su superior en igual caso: así avergonzaría un hijo a su padre. Tales son los funestos efectos del mal ejemplo".

70 Palti, *La invención*…, 144.

71 Palti, *La invención*…, 144.

72 *El Mono*, June 5, 1833, 8. In the original, "predican reformas, y no conocen la moral ni por el forro."

73 *El Mono*, June 5, 1833, 8. In the original, "la osadía y desprecio con que se trata a las autoridades de la iglesia, al clero, y las doctrinas de los concilios"; "[a] una conducta semejante, necesario era que se siguiera una reacción: antes ha tardado en estallar la revolución".

beyond a few weekly mentions which lumped it together with other publications, its brief tenure in the spotlight seemed to have passed. The editors became aware of this, and in its last issues, they consistently attempted to engage with *El Fénix*, challenging it: "If you have any shame", the editors wrote on May 25th, for example, "If they have any shame, they should enter into a formal discussion, refuting our concepts; after all, we have provoked them on many occasions, and we are willing to answer them with reasons or with sarcasm, as they come"[74]. It was, however, too late. *El Fénix* seemed to have taken *El Mono* at its word. On the one hand, its editors decided to ignore Wanton and his monkeys and focus on those anti-liberal papers that, at the very least, participated in rational debate, such as the Catholic *La Antorcha*, which appeared a few weeks after *El Mono*, in March 1833. On the other hand, it is more than likely that they also decided to take up *El Mono*'s taunt and engage it through the legal apparatus. That seems to be what they insinuated to have done later that year, in October 17th, when the editors of *El Fénix* proudly threatened another paper [*La lima de vulcano*] of "helping it" meet the same fate as the latter: "if the vulcanic lords want, then, to favor us with brochures as patriotic as *El Mono*..., without a doubt they will receive the order to suspend their patriotic tasks, because the government cannot, nor should it allow, the reorganization of the liberticide faction"[75]. By then, the now hegemonic liberals, at the height of their reformist agenda, could proudly state what was evident and what *El Mono* had long argued: "if this is called the slavery of print, then, we will have it and will have it because it is not allowed to write against the federative system so as to recommend monarchy and centralism, as the mentioned pamphlets and the extinguished *Antorcha* did"[76].

Despite the brevity of its run and its lack of a historiographical footprint, *El Mono* inaugurated the satirical tone and critical acerbity which made its spiritual successors, *La lima de vulcano* (1833-1837) and *El mosquito mexicano* (1834-1839), important laboratories of both conservative sensibilities and conservative critique at a moment in which conservatism as a political affiliation was in the process of coalescing. A sort of conservative canary in the liberal coal mine, *El Mono* understood, earlier than most, that, in the words of Antonio Annino, liberalism's ideological success never implied its success as political or institutional practice (29). As has been shown, this corrosive insight was developed, issue after issue, through Wanton's Juvenalian register; that is, through a satiric and insolent political agnosticism with regards to the abstractions of politics and a practice of reading that held the ideological to the standards of either morality or facticity. Indeed, because the contradictions of liberalism were clear for its editors, *El*

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74 *El Mono*, May 25, 1833, 5. In the original, "Si tienen vergüenza, entren en una formal discusión rebatiendo nuestros conceptos; pues bastantes ocasiones los hemos provocado a ello, y estamos dispuestos a contestarles con razones o con sarcasmos, según ellos vinieren".

75 *El Fénix*, Oct. 17, 1833, 4. In the original, "Si los señores vulcánicos quieren, pues, favorecernos con folletitos tan patrióticos como el Mono..., sin duda alguna que recibirán la ordencita para suspender suspatrióticas tareas, porque el gobierno no puede, ni debe permitir, que se reorganice la facción liberticida".

76 El Fénix, Oct. 17, 1833, 4. In the original, "…si a esto se llama esclavitud de imprenta, la hay y la habrá porque no es permitido escribir contra el sistema federativo para recomendar la monarquía y el centralismo, como lo hicieron los mencionados folletos y la apagada Antorcha".

Mono dreaded what the unrepentant rise of the men of Zavaleta would mean for the opposition. Surely, nothing short of exile, silence, and violence. On June 23, 1833, eighteen days after *El Mono*'s last issue, these fears materialized in the massive nation-wide purge that resulted from the *ley del caso*, a legislation by the federal government "according to which fifty-one named persons, all prominent figures, were summarily sentenced to six years of exile, apparently because of their political beliefs and, in some instances, certainly, for reasons of personal vengeance"[77].

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[77] Costeloe, *The Central Republic in Mexico*, 32. In fact, on April 12th, 1833 *El Mono* had published a preliminary list of the men targeted by the legislators behind the "ley del caso," which had been leaked from government.

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