

CONSERVATIVE STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE NEW MEDIA: CONSERVATIVE THOUGHT AND THE PRESS IN MEXICO 1848-1856

LAS ESTRATEGIAS CONSERVADORAS PARA PROMOVER LOS NUEVOS MEDIOS:
EL PENSAMIENTO CONSERVADOR Y LA PRENSA EN MÉXICO 1848-1856

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on conservative thought, broadly defined, and the methods of diffusion inaugurated by new print media. I analyze three newspapers published in Mexico from 1848-1856, *El Ómnibus*, *El Espectador de México*, and *El Universal*, to show that conservative publications were not always opposed to the speed of print commerce, but instead they complicate a rigid interpretation of conservatism by intermittently embracing and rejecting the destabilizing aspects of the press.

RESUMEN

Este artículo se concentra en el pensamiento conservador, definido ampliamente, y los sistemas de difusión que inauguraron los nuevos medios. Analizo tres periódicos que se publicaron en México entre 1848 y 1856, *El Ómnibus*, *El Espectador de México*, y *El Universal*, para señalar que las publicaciones conservadoras no siempre se mostraron en contra de la velocidad de la industria impresa, sino que frustran una interpretación rígida del conservadurismo al aceptar y rechazar, intermitentemente, los aspectos desequilibrantes de la prensa.

KEYWORDS

The press, Mexico, El Ómnibus, El Espectador de México, El Universal.

PALABRAS CLAVE

La prensa, México, El Ómnibus, El Espectador de México, El Universal

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The Mexican nineteenth century was a period of fluidity, marked by, among many other polarizing events, the fight for independence (1810-1821), the consequent internal struggles for national political legitimacy, and the defense against invasion by France and the United States. Although factions of elite political actors emerged from this political and social change, even within those groups opinions varied on the need for prolonged modifications and the pace with which to carry them out. Nevertheless, the years immediately after the Mexican American War (1846-1848) marked a new level of political consolidation with the creation of the Conservative Party in 1849. Print culture provided the arena in which writers and editors both advocated for change and emphasized the need for tradition. If, in the early years of independence, print culture retained the characteristics of the colonial print industry that catered to elite readers and benefitted Catholic institutions, the proposals for liberal reform identified changes that would both alter print culture and undermine traditional hierarchies¹. In this way, just as an ostensibly more coherent conservative intellectual movement appeared, new print technologies that accelerated print production and distribution threatened to undermine that movement through calls for secularization and the confiscation of Church property. To make matters worse, the distribution of ideas in the press was unequal given that between 1844 and 1861, in Mexico

City and the outlying regions, there were 40 liberal publications and only 11 that advocated for conservative thought². Censorship was one method with which to control texts critical of conservatism. As Anne Staples has noted, in the first half of the nineteenth century, there was opposition to new literary trends, such as the Mexican novel, but above all the enhanced circulation of the printed word threatened to spread unorthodox ideas, causing the Church to be vigilant and to safeguard morality with stern censorship³. However, in many conservative publications, editors and contributors recognized that the elimination of texts that were critical of conservatism was unsustainable in the era of new print technologies. Instead, conservative newspapers became a sounding board for the ills of the press, but also a space to develop systems of contestation.

This article focuses on conservative thought, broadly defined, and the methods of diffusion inaugurated by new print media. The sporadic nature of the new press, in one sense, reflects the uncertainty of the historical moment and the lack of equilibrium that resulted from the heightened circulation of texts. However, it also emphasizes a fragmented continuity and the promise of new publications to come, concepts that, in appearance, clashed with conservatism. I will show that conservative writers and editors were not always opposed to the speed of print commerce, but instead complicated a

¹ Edward Wright-Rios, *Searching for Madre Matiana. Prophecy and popular culture in modern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014), 50-51.

² Anne Staples, "La lectura y los lectores en los primeros años de vida independiente", in *Historia de la lectura en México. Seminario de la historia de la educación en México* (México: El Colegio de México, 1997), 99-100.

³ Staples, "La lectura y los lectores en los primeros años...", 95.

rigid interpretation of conservatism by intermittently embracing and rejecting the destabilizing aspects of the press⁴. Furthermore, conservatives capitalized on the power of new print media to shape readers in ways that would promote their worldview, including strategies to exploit the economic aspects of publishing in order to promote conservative publications. I focus my analysis on three newspapers with conservative tendencies: *El Espectador de México* (1851-1853), *El Universal, periódico independiente* (1848-1855), and *El Ómnibus* (1851-56). I examine the inaugural issues of *El Espectador* and *El Universal*, and the first volume of *El Ómnibus* published from 1851 to 1852. That is, I study these newspapers in the precise moment that they were defined, and that they defined themselves, as new. It was in these early issues that editors justified the creation of their new publications, addressed their concerns with reading as a productive practice, and reflected on the velocity of the circulation of texts and ideas. Moreover, the period between 1848 and 1852, the focus of my study, was pivotal in the development of conservatism given that, as mentioned above, the Conservative Party was founded in

1849. Although before the U.S. invasion of Mexico in 1846, most *letrados* were opposed to radical change, were socially conservative, and only moderately liberal in terms of economics⁵, those commonalities did not impede the insistence in categorizing differences⁶. Thus, to speak of the origins of conservatism is a complex task. For example, most political actors likely read the same political theories, which complicates their separation into two neatly delineated liberal and conservative groups and makes viable the claim that conservatism materialized from within the first stages of Mexican liberalism⁷. These three conservative publications reflect both the multiplicity of conservative thought and the absence of a consolidated reaction to new print culture.

CONSERVATIVE SCENES OF READING⁸

Víctor Goldgel has shown the relationship between the press and the fascination with “the new”, a designation that infused an object or idea with utility, and, at times, was also an irrefutable source of value ensured the success of new

⁴ Some have argued that prior to 1849, conservatives did not reject the idea of modernity, but preferred a slower restructuring of society that allowed for the conservation of traditional values and maintained order. 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)*, eds. Humberto Morales and William Fowler. (Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1999), 14.

⁵ Wright-Rios, *Searching for Madre Matiana...*, 54.

⁶ Michael Costeloe captures the complexity of categorizing political groups in the first half of the nineteenth century: “Apart from the obvious, such as federalist, centralists, liberals and conservatives, there were, to cite only a sample, yorkinos, escoceses, imperciales, bustamantistas, santanistas, aristócratas, anarquistas, demagogos, sansculottes, puros, ultras, and innovadores.” The Central Republic in Mexico, 1835-1846: “Hombres debien” in *The age of Santa Anna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 14.

⁷ For an excellent study on the philosophical similarities between Mexican liberalism and conservatism, see Charles Hale, *Mexican liberalism in the age of Mora, 1821-1853* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968). For a study on the liberal origins of Mexican conservatism, see Will Fowler, *The liberal origins of Mexican conservatism* (Glasgow: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1997). For a concise summary of the most transcendent arguments on the origins of Mexican conservatism in the first half of the nineteenth-century, see Catherine Andrews, “Sobre conservadurismo e ideas conservadoras en la primera república federal (1824-1835)” in *Conservadurismo y derechas en la historia de México*, ed. Erika Pani. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2009), 86-134.

⁸ I take this term from Fernando Unzueta’s, “Novel subjects: On reading and national (subject) formations”, in *Chasqui: revista de literatura latinoamericana* 31/2 (Phoenix 2002): 75-94.

publications⁹. Goldgel explains that in the era of new print media, the speed with which texts circulated infused the new media with power and changed writing habits in a way that invited disequilibrium between the act of writing and content. For example, if it were suddenly necessary to write more, how would writers fill such a void? What topics would the writer explore? Goldgel quotes Domingo Sarmiento as saying that the press could be “sterile,” devoid of topics of interest, obligating him to use his imagination in order to fill pages, or to publish texts collected from other publications¹⁰. Thus, the new press created an environment grounded in the need to write and publish and the necessity to keep pace with new rhythms in the generation of ideas. Goldgel goes on to explain how the dynamic between the reader and new media developed, first in the early decades of the nineteenth century when the press circulated ideas that startled readers from an existential slumber, and afterward, when journalists ceased to delve deeply into topics, instead inciting a reaction in the reader through stimulation that engaged without boring¹¹. The conservative press reacted to all the concepts that Goldgel relates to the new including speed, boredom, the urgency to write and publish, and the obligation to find quickly topics worthy of publication. Nevertheless, their reaction was not always negative. In the conservative publications I examine, new print media was both a source of legitimacy to exploit, and an annoying marketing technique to criticize.

Studies in new print media inevitably require sustained analysis of how texts were consumed in “scenes of reading”, where the acceleration of publishing converged with the creative, meaning-seeking labor of reading. In his work on the history of reading, Roger Chartier explains, through his analysis of Michel de Certeau, that writing is a conservative task, “durable, and fixed” while reading is unfixed and short-lived, “always on the order of the ephemeral”¹². Chartier explains that de Certeau is suggesting that reading is not to decipher a message inscribed in the text, but an act that recognizes no boundaries between the author’s intention and the analysis performed by the reader¹³. In other words, if writing produces visible textual evidence, readers operate more ambiguously, behind the scenes, and leave no clues. The duty of the historian, then, is to identify the differences between the materiality of the texts and the strategies of reading. Chartier taps into a long history of studies on reading to emphasize that new print media introduced unforeseen levels of analytic instability and obligated cultural critics to rethink their task. His comments are useful for my examination of conservative thought and new print media because, on the one hand, he describes writing as a conservative task that contrasts with reading and, on the other, he underlines the need to consider the organization of the printed page, not just the text, as the generator of a reader’s interpretation.

⁹ Víctor Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América: prensa, moda y literatura en el siglo XIX* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 2013), 50.

¹⁰ Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América...*, 77.

¹¹ Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América...*, 80.

¹² Roger Chartier, “Laborers and voyagers: From the text to the reader”, in *Diacritics* 22/2 (Baltimore 1992): 50.

¹³ Chartier, “Laborers and voyagers...”, 50.

In the context of Latin American scenes of reading, William Acree underlines the importance of “reading publics—both literate and illiterate” in the formation of communities that extend beyond texts¹⁴. In societies with high rates of illiteracy, reading was also the interpretation of the acoustic images produced by orality. Furthermore, print culture, he explains, is not just the printed page but “the relations between the practices of reading and writing, on the one hand, and social behaviors, individual and collective values, economic transactions, political decisions, state institutions, and ideologies, on the other”¹⁵. Conservative publications recognized reading’s wide-ranging implications for all levels of society and the multiplicity of reading materials that had begun to populate the scenes of reading. In response, they used new print media to promote and distribute a conservative archive. No surprisingly, the archive often contained a combination of original texts by conservative writers and European literary works. Far from the Latin American novel, serialized in newspapers as a tool to form national communities, in the conservative press, writers often promoted narratives that reminded readers of traditional forms of authority.

In his excellent study of reading and the formation of Chilean literature in the nineteenth century, Juan Poblete explains that fiction challenged the church and the state over the control of writing, provoking debate on how literature could

both entertain and educate readers in ways necessary for the successful completion of the liberal nation-building project¹⁶. To train readers to read fiction was a delicate task given that they would inevitably use their skills to develop their own tastes in the consumption of print culture¹⁷. In the conservative press, writers expressed concern over the appearance of new readers who, through daily access to new debates and international news, become readers who were more prone to disapproval. However, the fears were not limited to the influence of fiction, but emerged from the combination of the disparate texts that Acree mentions and that occupied the pages of newspapers. An added concern over new readers was their ability to condemn newspapers. As new publications provided the platform on which readers became cultural critics, those same newspapers depended on paying subscribers to stay in operation. Therefore, in the conservative press, the encounter between new readers and the new press created conflicts over the need to gratify readers and to include materials that would promote their mission. As I will show, conservative writers acknowledged all of these new developments as both obstacles and opportunities.

The instability that appeared with new print media and reading practices also extended to publishing and dissemination. In addition to the allure of “the new” described by Goldgel, with the saturation of the market by texts, the survival of

¹⁴ William Acree, *Everyday reading: print culture and collective identity in the Río de la Plata, 1780-1910* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011), 3.

¹⁵ Acree, *Everyday Reading*..., 3.

¹⁶ Juan Poblete, *Literatura chilena del siglo XIX: entre públicos lectores y figuras autoriales* (Santiago: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2003), 267-268.

¹⁷ Poblete, *Literatura chilena del siglo XIX*..., 268.

individual newspapers was also extremely uncertain¹⁸. At times, the obligation to maintain an active readership threatened to contradict the mission of a publication. For example, the editors of *La Cruz*, one of the foremost conservative Catholic publications in nineteenth-century Mexico, explained that although their objectives were moral, not financial, they would only be able to publish one issue a week until they had more subscribers¹⁹. Jonathan Paine develops the history of reading through the lens of what he calls “economic criticism”, the study of the relationship between aesthetic and economic value, and the role the reader plays in creating that value²⁰. Paine’s work highlights the relationship between publishing, reading, and consumption. Uniting these practices, Paine says, is the transaction between narrative, reader, and the pleasure of reading, a transaction in which “the reader trades time against the anticipation of textual gratification”²¹. Conservative publications worked to produce the anticipation of texts to come, to publish more, thus creating the transaction that Paine describes, the promise that, in exchange for the reader’s time, and a few coins, the reader would have access to the conservative agenda. On the other hand, as is evident in the example above of *La Cruz*, when finance

and publishing interact, the result can be a struggle between “financial debt and moral bankruptcy”, between commerce and mission²².

THE CONSERVATIVE ARCHIVE

El Espectador de México was a contemporary of *El Omnibus*, appearing in print between January 1851 and April 1852, and is defined by its defense of Catholicism²³. The inaugural issue begins with the section titled “Prospecto” in which the author outlines the mission of the publication²⁴. He begins by explaining that if the nineteenth century is the era of revolution and misguided ideological musings, it is also a time for renewed contemplation of truth as it is revealed through Catholic faith. The aim is to revive faith through the creation of a new publication that will place the sciences, literature, and the arts in Catholicism’s debt²⁵. “Prospecto” is also a self-reflexive exercise on the role of the press in the dissemination of the paper’s call to truth. First, the editor indirectly recognizes the way in which the press saturates the public with insipid reading material: “We will undertake a project that will serve as a distraction to the dryness that almost

¹⁸ Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América...*, 53.

¹⁹ Lilia Vieyra Sánchez, “La frecuencia de las publicaciones periódicas, 1822-1855”, in *Empresa y cultura en tinta y papel (1800-1860)*, ed. Laura Beatriz Suárez de la Torre (México: Instituto de Investigaciones Bibliográficas, UNAM, 2001), 452.

²⁰ Jonathan Paine, *Selling the story: transaction and narrative value in Balzac, Dostoevsky, and Zola* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 2.

²¹ Paine, *Selling the story...*, 11.

²² Paine, *Selling the story...*, 4.

²³ Although an examination of editors and printing houses falls outside the scope of this article, the renowned conservative Rafael de Rafael y Vilá, a powerhouse in the Mexican print industry, was registered as *El Espectador*’s printer. For more information on the pivotal role that Rafael de Rafael y Vilá played in the Mexican print industry, see Javier Rodríguez Piña, “Rafael de Rafael y Vilá: el conservadurismo como empresa”, in *Constructores de un cambio cultural: impresores-editores y librerías en la ciudad de México, 1830-1855*, ed. Laura Suárez de la Torre (México: Instituto Mora, 2003), 305-380.

²⁴ Unless otherwise noted, the texts I analyze from *El Espectador*, *El Universal*, and *El Omnibus* were published anonymously.

²⁵ “Prospecto”, *El Espectador de México*, Jan. 04, 1851, 5.

always accompanies political journalism; the distraction would not be sterile given that we intend to arrive at the same destination but by two different paths”²⁶. The search for truth comes in the form of texts whose purpose is to distract readers from the publications that bore with dull politics. If the arid publications that focus solely on politics do not cultivate truth, *El Espectador* will fertilize the arid print wasteland with distraction. In that way, this conservative publication embraces the speed of the press and its ability to overwhelm the reading public as a means to cultivate a new relationship that seeks truth, intertwining its mission with the acceleration of the modernizing print technologies.

While the author does not speak explicitly of boredom, the description of the reading experience as “arid” and “sterile” allows us to imagine a reader on the verge of languor, a state only remedied by distraction. In the following section, “Plan de publicacion,” the author also emphasizes the need to exploit the expediency of new print media to distract readers²⁷. The author does not suggest the outright destruction of the literary canon; instead, he capitalizes on the speed of the press to add new material to what I call a conservative archive in construction: “*El Espectador* will publish

original articles in each issue about all, or the majority, of the subjects that form part of our project, but not at the expense of translations or copies of the best works published in other countries, especially those from Europe, for which we have prepared the most timely reception for all of the most important works”²⁸. The archive the author proposes is constructed on the simultaneous recognition of the need for novelty (original texts) and the propagation, through translation and reprinting, of an already established literary tradition.

In a final passage, the writer again expresses concern over the power of the press to saturate scenes of reading with abundant, unsuitable texts. Given that modern intellectualism, “provokes the daily publication of multiple works about all branches of knowledge”²⁹, there is a need to separate from the overwhelming abundance of texts only those works that support the conservative search for truth. Once the editors of *El Espectador* conclude which texts are the most important, they will harness the new print technologies to create a new archive and make it quickly accessible to readers:

“we will publish all the most important works, translating the ones written in foreign languages, and fulfill this mission, each issue of *El Espectador*

²⁶ “Prospecto”, *El Espectador de México*, Jan. 04, 1851, 7-8. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine. In the original, “Emprenderemos una tarea que servirá como de distracción a la aridez de que van casi siempre acompañados los trabajos periodísticos en el campo de la política; pero esta distracción no sería estéril, puesto que nuestro ánimo es llegar á un mismo fin por dos caminos diferentes”

²⁷ The titles and quotations I cite in Spanish throughout this article appear just as they do in the original printing, with grammatical and spelling anomalies.

²⁸ “Plan de publicacion”, *El Espectador de México*, Jan. 04, 1851, 8. In the original, “El Espectador, pues, publicará en cada número artículos originales sobre todas ó la mayor parte de las materias que forman su programa, sin que por eso deje igualmente de publicar, copiados o traducidos, los mejores escritos que sobre ellas salga á luz de los demas países, especialmente en Europa, á cuyo fin nos hemos procurado la oportuna recepción de todas las publicaciones de más importancia.”

²⁹ “Plan de publicacion”, *El Espectador de México*, Jan. 04, 1851, 9. In the original, “hace que diariamente salgan á luz multitud de obras sobre todos los ramos del saber”.

will include eight loose-leaf pages that can be bound separately. In this way, our subscribers will quickly have in their possession, and we can say at almost no cost, a copious and selective collection of the best works to see the light of day in Europe, in compact, uniform volumes, beautifully and clearly printed. This collection will be titled, *The Library of El Espectador*³⁰.

The self-made literary supplement appears as a method to incorporate the reader's participation in the construction of the archive. The editors will provide the texts, although they do not specify which texts, only that they will be the most important European texts. The reader will bind them, place them in their personal library, and consult them in the future. The pleasure of reading, then, is dependent on the labor of bookbinding. Furthermore, the author emphasizes aesthetics (adornment) as part of a marketing campaign to encourage readers to consume, and create, new print media. If one of the goals of the conservative press is to counter the speed of the press and the print industry, the author indicates that they must first engage its power to capitalize on its attributes.

The resolution for bored readers and lackluster reading material is variety, an element of reading culture that new print media makes possible. In other words, variety as a means to stave off boredom appears in *El Espectador* not only as a new tool that permits writers to mold

potential readers, but also as a way to channel the energy of new print media by tapping into “the growing legitimacy of variety and the curious on the printed page”³¹. Nevertheless, and this is key to understanding the ways the conservative press engaged new print technology, variety here has a specific, non-traditional definition. Variety as a means to negate boredom, to stimulate the reader in a certain –conservative– manner culminates in novelty remolded as a conservative principle. The reader's participation in the propagation of conservatism through print culture goes beyond the act of reading as a community-building practice. The reader will also use his hands to construct the conservative archive. The instability of new print media created both the impossibility to think of nineteenth-century literary culture without considering the role of the press, and the absence of a stable literary market³². *El Espectador* incorporates that instability by using new print media to create its own literary archive, and, in a way, to supplement the experience of reading the newspaper, an experience progressively defined by variety, with the rapid creation and dissemination of an already recognized literary canon.

El Universal, periódico independiente, published from 1848 to 1855 also under the direction of Rafael de Vilá, shared the mission of *El Espectador* in pursuing the truth through the creation

³⁰ “Plan de la publicación”, *El Espectador de México*, Jan. 04, 1851, 9. In the original, “nosotros publicaremos todas las mas importantes, traduciendo las que estén escritas en idioma extranjero y se repartirán con todos los números del Espectador ocho páginas mas, destinadas á este objeto, y con foliatura separada para que puedan encuadrarse aparte. De esta manera nuestros suscritores poseerán dentro de poco tiempo, y puede decirse casi por ningun costo, una colección copiosa y selecta de las mejores obras que ven y han visto la luz pública en Europa, toda en volúmenes uniformes, de una impresion clara, bella y compacta. Esta colección llevará por título: ‘Biblioteca del Espectador’”.

³¹ Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América...*, 83. In the original, “la creciente legitimidad de la variedad y de lo curioso en la página impresa”

³² Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América...*, 53.

of a new publication. The inaugural issue, published on November 16, 1848, contains the article significantly titled “Que debe ser un periodico?” in which the author performs a reflexive exercise on the advantages and disadvantages of the burgeoning print industry. He explains that in creating a new newspaper, the goal is to provide the medium necessary for all readers to achieve perfection through personal improvement. Given the growing abundance of texts, such personal development meant that readers must choose the proper reading material, thus placing *El Universal* in direct competition for subscribers with other publications of the period³³. The author explains that readers often decide what to read under the influence of superficiality and artifice, strategies that were already common in the newspaper industry, as we say in the literary supplement above: “[the decision] is often and easily cheated by sparkling cosmetic adornment with which they almost always decorate novelty and ingenuity”³⁴. Especially noteworthy here is the identification of novelty as a means of leading readers astray. Novelty in combination with adornment is what characterizes those publications that obscure truth.

In an article titled “Un nuevo periodista” published in the second issue of *El Universal* on November 17, 1848, the author, in a sarcastic tone, highlights

the role of the press in the development of new writing and reading practices. The article is written from the perspective of one of the new journalists, in a self-mocking gesture that lays bare the shortcomings of the press. To begin, the author laments that the press has obligated writers to write incessantly in detriment to quality³⁵. Equally as important, in spite of the quality of writing, texts will reach a broad reading audience, thus creating a new “*ensor publico*” who need only pay the meager price of a newspaper to achieve this new status. However, the new reader is incapable of identifying quality writing since the textual inundation of reader’s lives has made it impossible: “given that there is a world in everyone’s head, so what one person classifies as logical and persuasive, another will find incoherent and unsatisfactory”³⁶. There is a lingering fear of the new reader as authority given that interpretation, as Chartier observed, is unhinged and arbitrary. Moreover, the low prices of the new publications grant all readers access to important reading material. Nevertheless, as we know, readers are the consumers that keep the publication afloat and it is impossible to abandon them. Although good writing and worthy topics are sacrificed in order to maintain the new rhythm of print capitalism, readers must be trained to read in the correct ways.

³³ “¿Que debe ser un periodico?”, *El Universal*, Nov.16, 1848, 1.

³⁴ “¿Que debe ser un periodico?”, *El Universal*, Nov.16, 1848, 1. In the original, “[la decision] es burlada muy comun y fácilmente por los falsos brillos de oropel con que casi siempre se engalanan la novedad y el ingenio”.

³⁵ “Un nuevo periodista”, *El Universal*, Nov.17, 1848, 4.

³⁶ “Un nuevo periodista”, *El Universal*, Nov.17, 1848, 4. In the original, “porque como cada cabeza es un mundo, lo que uno califica de lógico y persuasivo, para otro es incoherente y no le satisface”.

Although the author's assessment of the press hints at the logical conclusion that it is unacceptable given that it propagates frivolous texts and converts readers into unworthy critics, the author surprisingly concludes that the press is an insurmountable authority. He laments the tyranny of the press and expresses that it is impossible to please all newspapers. He also underlines the contradiction that a nation whose guiding political ideology (liberalism) is freedom can limit the circulation of ideas through extreme criticism³⁷. Where, then, does that leave the new journalist and reader in the world of rapid change: "what flag or party would harmonize all of the modifications?"³⁸ One resolution the author suggests to counter the intense level of criticism is to dissolve all alliances, to break with political bonds, and to flatter and offend as one sees fit³⁹. What is lost in this process is truth, making this article an outline of what to avoid in the press, and of the obstacles the conservative press faced as it attempted to gain momentum in a print market dominated by liberalism.

El Espectador and *El Universal* show us ways to incorporate new print media into the conservative mission during the mid-nineteenth century. As I mentioned, although conservatives recognized the problem of the abundance of texts that painted conservatism in a derogatory light, they also acknowledged that censorship was not the only strategy of resistance. In "Que debe ser un periodico?" the author

proposes a conservative interpretation of novelty that is both anchored in criticism and denotes approval. Interestingly, while the author of "Prospecto" alluded to boredom as an unfortunate side effect of the saturation of scenes of reading, the author of "Que debe ser un periodico?" laments precisely that which entertains too much: adornment. At risk is the loss of authority, or, equally unfortunate, the power of the press to impose its own authority. The press is, then, the tyranny to be challenged and the medium through which to cultivate what it means to be an authority. Only the speed and abundance of the press can make possible the simultaneous questioning and establishment of authority, laying bare the dilemma of the conservatives: to resist the liberal domination of the press or to profit from the legitimacy the press offers. In other words, to use new print media to excite the (conservative) readership carried with it the task of moderating that same excitement⁴⁰.

INTERRUPTED READING AND THE VISUALIZATION OF COMMERCE

While *El Espectador* and *El Universal* were newspapers of established conservative tendencies, *El Ómnibus* occupied a more ambiguous space in the history of the conservative press. *El Ómnibus* was printed from October 1851 to June 1856 under the direction of editors Vicente and José Sebastián Segura Argüelles and was

³⁷ "Un nuevo periodista", *El Universal*, Nov.17, 1848, 4.

³⁸ "Un nuevo periodista", *El Universal*, Nov.17, 1848, 4. In the original, "qué bandera o partido tomar que armonice y concierte con todas sus modificaciones"

³⁹ "Un nuevo periodista", *El Universal*, Nov.17, 1848, 4.

⁴⁰ Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América...*, 65.

organized in six volumes. In its initial stage of publication, the stage on which I focus this study, the title appeared only as *El Ómnibus*. However, it is important to note that as the paper evolved, the original title was supplemented first by *Publicación de literatura, variedades y anuncios* in 1853 and *Periódico Literario, Agrícola, Fabril, de Religión, Variedades y Avisos* in 1854. The evolution of the title indicates change, progressing through a focus on literary content, and finally to the eclectic combination of literature, agriculture and religion. Studies of *El Ómnibus* demonstrate its mercurial nature, with some claiming it began as a liberal publication and became progressively more conservative⁴¹. Others have studied its relationship with other conservative publications, highlighting its role in polemics with liberal publications. For example, Erika Pani contrasts the different strands of conservatism found in *El Universal* and *El Ómnibus* in 1855-56, the moment when political actors were engaged in intense debate over reforms that would become the constitution of 1857⁴². She concludes that *El Ómnibus* was part of a branch of conservatism that was “likely not the most traditional”⁴³ given that it both supported the construction of a political party composed of members from all ideological groups, and advocated for the abandonment of abstractions and

the preservation of order. Nevertheless, in another intervention, Pani divides her study of the conservative press into two groups, one that was historically delineated by the end of the fight for independence and the beginning of the Mexican American War, and another that began with the defeat to the U.S. in 1848. In the absence of a coherent conservative movement, Pani designates the first group of newspapers “Catholic” and included *El Católico*, *El Ilustrador Católico*, *La Verdad Católica*, *El Espectador de México*, and *La Cruz*⁴⁴. The second group composed of publications that had moved beyond the limits of the defense of catholicism to call themselves conservative, included *El Universal*, *El Eco Nacional*, *El Tiempo*, *El Amigo del Pueblo*, *La Sociedad*, *El Pájaro Verde*, and *El Ómnibus*⁴⁵. Blanca García Gutiérrez, on the other hand, asks how conservative publications such as *El Ómnibus*, *El Universal* and *El Orden* debated the significance of the independence movement with liberal newspapers like *El Siglo XIX* and *El Monitor Republicano*, suggesting that *El Ómnibus* was unequivocally conservative⁴⁶.

In reality, *El Ómnibus* contained moments of ambiguity where the division between liberalism and conservatism blurred, thus presenting an especially relevant example of the crossroads between liberal and conservative thought, and the

⁴¹ “El Ómnibus” in *Publicaciones Periódicas Mexicanas del Siglo XIX: 1822-1855*, eds. Miguel Ángel Castro and Guadalupe Curiel. (Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma, 2000)

⁴² Erika Pani, *Para mexicanizar el Segundo Imperio: el imaginario político de los imperialistas* (México: Colegio de México Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2001), 97-98.

⁴³ Pani, *Para mexicanizar el Segundo Imperio*, 98.

⁴⁴ Erika Pani, “Para difundir las doctrinas ortodoxas y vindicarlas de los errores dominantes: los periódicos católicos y conservadores en el siglo XIX”, in *La República de las letras. Asomos a la cultura escrita del México decimonónico*. Vol. II: Publicaciones periódicas y otros impresos, Eds. Belem Clark de Lara and Elisa Speckman Guerra (México: Universidad Autónoma de México, 2005), 120.

⁴⁵ Pani, “Para difundir...”, 120.

⁴⁶ Blanca García Gutiérrez, “La experiencia cultural de los conservadores durante el México independiente: un ensayo interpretativo”, *Signos Históricos* 1/1 (Ciudad de México 1999): 127-148.

complexity that evolves from moments of contestation help us understand the role of the press in the development of conservatism. For instance, in two representative moments, contributors to *El Ómnibus* react negatively to accusations that it is a conservative publication. In “Plan del Omnibus” published on June 23, 1852, the author reacts to comments that appeared in *El Eco de Comercio de Tampico* that *El Ómnibus* sought to overthrow the federal system⁴⁷. He writes, “If el Omnibus wants to defeat the divine system, and el Eco conserve it, which of the two newspapers should we call conservative?”⁴⁸. In an inversion of stereotypical liberal and conservative traits, the author of “Plan del Ómnibus” posits that in this iteration of conservatism, the conservatives are those advocating for change; they wish to overthrow the “divine system” of liberalism while the liberals are those who demand continuity. In another inversion of roles, the author asks why contributors to *El Ómnibus* are labeled fanatics or advocates of tyranny if there is no evidence in print to support such claims. Is it not more accurate, they ask, to call fanatics those who, blinded by their political affiliation, make baseless accusations? It is clear in the examples above, as well as in the lack of scholarly consensus around a concrete political affiliation of *El Ómnibus*, that this newspaper paints a specific shade of conservatism defined by moderation.

I examine Volume I of *El Ómnibus*, published from October 1, 1851 to December 30, 1852, to show that the com-

plex relationship between conservatism and new print media is exacerbated in a publication that promotes conservative moderation. I limit my study to Volume I in order to identify the publicatory and discursive strategies conservative writers used to stimulate interest in the publication during the initial stage of the newspaper. As with *El Ómnibus* and *El Universal*, *El Ómnibus* had to establish a mission, forge a productive method of distribution, and capture and maintain readers’ attention. I argue that it was during this first stage of *El Ómnibus* that editors established what I call the foundational promise to its readers: that with a faithful readership, one day *El Ómnibus* would be published daily. As I will explain in what follows, the promise is indicative of conservative attempts to capture the spirit of the new, to take advantage of the acceleration of print culture, and, perhaps problematically for traditional conservatism, to project a way of thinking that was grounded in the expectation of the future as opposed to experience.

I begin my study of *El Ómnibus* with an analysis of the organization of the first page of the newspaper, the space that greeted each reader and informed the reading experience. The masthead combines the visualization of modernity in motion with the instructions for the sale and circulation of the newspaper. The lithographed image of the omnibus captures a coach in a moment of agitation caused by rapid movement. Each of the four horses’ heads rear backwards and forwards

⁴⁷ “Plan del Omnibus”, *El Ómnibus*, June 23, 1852, 1.

⁴⁸ “Plan del Omnibus”, *El Ómnibus*, June 23, 1852, 1. In the original, “Si el Omnibus quiere derrocar el sistema divino, y el Eco conservarlo, ¿cuál de los dos periódicos debe llamarse conservador?”

as they pull the weight of the coach and its passengers. The image encapsulates the speed of textual circulation and the ways that new modes of transportation shortened distances between communities. Just below the image of the coach is the nameplate in thick, bold letters, straddled on each side by two important notes on its consumption. To the left is the price in Mexico City and to the right is the price in the provinces. Both prices include home delivery, establishing a relationship between the speed of the coach and the rapid appearance of the newspaper in the subscriber's household.

The carriage incorporates the newspaper into the modern technological rhythm ushered in by radical change and the need for new means of transport. But the image also locates the *El Ómnibus* within the progressive print practices of visualization. María Esther Pérez Salas explains that the relationship between text and image in nineteenth-century *costumbrismo* was possible due to the arrival of Claudio Linati and the lithograph to Mexico in 1826. The new print technology made it possible to accompany texts with images, and sparked the creation of lithographic workshops in Mexico that by the late 1830's began to provide the commercial infrastructure necessary for periodicals to contain images⁴⁹. Pérez Salas explains:

“The inclusion of new typographic elements, such as etchings and lithographs of growing quality was a constant in the publications of the 1840s and 1850s . . . started a competition to offer to the reading public of the mid-nineteenth century beautifully edited works with new topics and elaborated with the most recent printing technologies”⁵⁰.

As seen in the fragment, the combination of text and image became commonplace and established new relationships between words and visualization. In *costumbrismo*, the description of a character type was often accompanied by an image, thus establishing a “true” portrait of society.

The modern relationship between text and image in the arguably conservative *costumbrismo* genre invites us to contemplate how that same relationship functioned on the first page of *El Ómnibus*. To begin, the text that accompanies the image of the carriage is not literary, but commercial and informed potential customers of the economic urgency new print media demanded. The text provides important information about the price and distribution practices of the newspaper, as well as how that information changes according to the location of the subscriber. In that way, the image stresses the introduction of modernizing printing practices even in newspapers of a more conservative tone; but it also functions to prop up the publicatory and economic operations that aimed to keep the paper in circulation.

⁴⁹ María Esther Pérez Salas, *Costumbrismo y litografía en México: un nuevo modo de ver* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005), 211.

⁵⁰ Pérez Salas, *Costumbrismo y litografía en México...*, 212. In the original, “La inclusión de nuevos elementos tipográficos, así como de grabados y litografías cada vez de mejor calidad, fue una constante dentro de las publicaciones de los años cuarenta y cincuenta... iniciaran una competencia para ofrecer al público lector de mediados del siglo XIX obras bellamente editadas con temas novedosos y trabajadas con las últimas técnicas de impresión del momento”.

The image of the carriage evokes ideas of acceleration and circulation while the text makes the reader a promise that the publication will be economically accessible in the future.

Just below the image of the nameplate is a notice to those who will deliver the paper, “Aviso a los repartidores,” which contains the foundational promise mentioned above as well as the incentive to deliver the paper and convince readers to subscribe: “This newspaper, which later will be a daily, is now published on Wednesday and Saturday, and costs one real per dozen or one peso for a hundred, sold in the Aguila de Oro arcade, M. Murguía y C. printing house, and whoever can gather one hundred subscribers will earn four and a half reales daily”⁵¹. The notice reinforces the need to capture the burgeoning print market, to increase the print run from two days a week to daily, and it underlines the economic advantages of participating in the new print campaign by providing income for deliverymen. The need to multiply the number of readers, to grow the readership in order to make more cash and increase the print run, reminds us of the moral conflict of *La Cruz* whose editors ensured readers that, in spite of the economic need for more readers, their message was purely moral. Paine’s reference to financial debt and moral bankruptcy helps to explain the anxiety of the editors of *La Cruz*⁵². To reveal the need to earn money created a conflict of interest with the moral debt they had with the conservative Catholic sector of

Mexican society. But, the financial debt of publishing was not repaid, it would create a moral bankruptcy through the interruption of publication.

The *El Ómnibus*’ strategy is different in that the image/text combination on the front page appeals to multiple implicit readers. First, the solvent readers who seek the Catholic message. Second, the reader who seeks a lucrative opportunity. In that way, *El Ómnibus* appeals to consumers as well as laborers. The foundational promise of doubling their print run could be a promise to readers that they could enjoy a more abundant supply of conservative thought; but it is also a promise to potential workers who would benefit economically from a more consistent print run. Thus, the image of the carriage is accompanied by a text, as Perez Salas discusses, but in this instance, the text makes explicit the economic underpinnings of the newspaper and the importance of employing workers as inseparable from the survival of the publication. It is noteworthy that the foundational promise maintained its privileged space on the first page of *El Ómnibus*, just below the nameplate, until the promise was partially fulfilled in August 1852, when the newspaper began to be printed three days a week as opposed to two, and in June 1853, when it began to be published every day except Sunday.

It is also noteworthy that on July 7, 1852, the image of the carriage lost its prominence on the front page. It was reduced in size and only two horses pulled

⁵¹ “Prospecto”, *El Ómnibus*, Oct.18, 1851, 1. In the original, “Este periódico, que después será diario, sale ahora los Miércoles y Sábados, y se vende a un real la docena o un peso el ciento, en el portal del Aguila de Oro, imprenta de M. Murguía y C., así es que el que reuna cien suscriptores, gana cuatro y medio reales diarios”.

⁵² Paine, *Selling the story...*, 4.

it instead of four. The carriage also changed directions. From the inaugural issue to July 3, 1852, the carriage moved from left to right across the page. Beginning on July 7, 1852, the much smaller carriage moved from the right to the left. While it is difficult to know why the image changed, it highlights the tendency of the conservative newspaper to modify its presentation. As the editors worked to increase the print run, the image of the modern form of transportation held less interest, literally forcing it to change directions as more issues of *El Ómnibus* appeared. In theory, the more frequent print run would have meant the addition of more carriages to transport them, or possibly a more exaggerated representation of the speed of the coach to emphasize the acceleration of the print run. Nevertheless, the editor's decision to relegate the carriage to more inferior space, and to reverse its direction, suggests that once *El Ómnibus* had obtained the readership necessary to increase the print run, they changed their direction. Therefore, *El Ómnibus* greeted readers with the visualization of the pace of modernity, and the promise that if readers were loyal in their consumption, they could rely on more frequent instalments of the conservative message. In that way, from the first issues, *El Ómnibus* was enmeshed in the struggle between the promotion of the conservative message, and the danger of allowing that message to be undermined by the economic need for readers to consume.

Having established the visual and economic strategies of *El Ómnibus* used to perform self-promotion, I now turn

to how the contributors explained the ideological purpose of the newspaper in the inaugural issue printed on October 18, 1851. In "Prospecto", the author explains that the new publication is an example of the influx of print journalism that is characteristic of an enlightened society, or a society on the path to enlightenment. Newspapers are forums for public discussion and, the author continues, supplements education since organized education would be unproductive if the reading public was unable to find satisfaction through reading. The problem, the author explains, is high prices and infrequent publication, prohibitive traits of the newspapers that impede the development of readers. The mission of *El Ómnibus* is thus twofold: to highlight reading as a community-forming practice that will ultimately produce enlightened citizens, and to participate in the saturation of the print market with a new, aptly priced and consistently published newspaper.

The author of "Prospecto" uses a combination of visual and discursive strategies to promote the mission of *El Ómnibus* and to entice readers to consume. He builds on the general summary of the goals of *El Ómnibus* to focus more explicitly on the need to publish more frequently in order to reach a broader reading audience. The paper seeks to, "publish a newspaper everyday (*)... that is dedicated to the dissemination among ordinary people of the news that is most important for their wellbeing, without focusing on speeches or commentary, that often no one reads, or they read it superficially and quickly"⁵³. The asterisk, a

⁵³ "Prospecto", *El Ómnibus*, Oct.18, 1851, 1. In the original, "publicar todos los días un periódico (*)... dedicado

visual signpost that distracts the reader and directs his gaze to the margins of the page where a footnote informs that, in reality, *El Ómnibus* will only be published two days a week while editors attend to administrative duties and preparation. Thus, in this inaugural issue, the foundational promise appears again in an article that explains the mission of the new publication, but it is immediately subordinated to the message on the margins that is “a self-reflexive commentary on the conditions of its own production”⁵⁴.

On page 2 of “Prospecto”, the author uses a second visual tactic to convince readers to purchase *El Ómnibus*. The text in normal font size is suddenly interrupted by enlarged letters in bold with the price in Mexico City, “one eighth of a real,” and the higher price in the provinces, “Outside the capital, it will be sold for a quarter of a real”⁵⁵. The reading experience was first interrupted to qualify the promise of printing every day, and second, to reassure the reader that the paper will be economically accessible. One way to achieve the goal of pleasing the reader and increasing the likelihood that *El Ómnibus* will become a daily, is to print only what most interests the reader, which the author describes as texts that are unimpeded by “discursos y comentarios”⁵⁶ that could delay or negate the reader’s interest. In other words, the editors propose a transaction with the readers, what Paine describes in terms of narrative: “the narrative itself can be viewed

as the object of a real transaction between author and reader in which the reader trades time against the anticipation of textual gratification”⁵⁷. Here the transaction is an economic narrative that combines the promise to harness the power of new print media to increase the print run, but also to increase the reader’s satisfaction by removing content that affects their attention. *El Ómnibus* sought to use the speed of the new print media to slow down the velocity of reading, a side effect of the acceleration of modern printing processes and distribution practices.

Another technique to foster a more active and engaged readership was the reprinting and critique of other texts from other publications. The practice of reprinting texts reveals the anxiety of competing with other publications for the reader’s satisfaction, but also, and necessarily, the need to compete with the speed with which other newspapers published. Once a contentious article was printed, competing newspapers reacted quickly. Some of the most revealing moments in *El Ómnibus* appear when writers engage liberals by reprinting articles critical of conservatism. On October 22, 1851, the second issue of *El Ómnibus* an article from the rival *El Monitor Republicano* was republished and included footnotes to highlight the article’s weaknesses and rhetorical missteps. The original article which appeared in *El Monitor Republicano* on October 18 and 19, 1851 and was titled

á divulgar entre el comun de gentes las noticias que mas interesan á su bienestar, sin detenerse mucho en discursos y comentarios, que por lo comun no se leen, ó se leen superficialmente y de prisa”.

⁵⁴ Paine, *Selling the story...*, 10.

⁵⁵ “Prospecto”, *El Ómnibus*, Oct. 18, 1851, 2. In the original, “un octavo de real”, “Fuera de la capital se dará á cuartilla”.

⁵⁶ “Prospecto”, *El Ómnibus*, Oct. 18, 1851, 1.

⁵⁷ Paine, *Selling the story...*, 11.

“Proyecto de ley sobre bienes de manos muertas”, outlined the strategy, organized in a series of mandates, for depriving the church of its material possessions. The dates are important since they indicate that *El Ómnibus* was able to respond three days after the original text was printed, demonstrating that the speed of the press could work to their advantage. Among the liberal articles was the decree that the church would give over its wealth and that the national bank would administer it, thus nationalizing the church’s possessions and making them the property of the people. The intention to nationalize church property dated the essay as part of a broader discursive branch of liberalism. However, what interests me here is the modern practice of collecting a text from a rival publication, reproducing it for the readers of *El Ómnibus*, and using footnotes to undermine its legitimacy.

To begin, in *El Ómnibus* the article is retitled “Despojo de los bienes de la iglesia”, a title that rearticulates the legal thrust of the liberal newspaper in terms of plunder. Nevertheless, it is in the footnotes that a truly unique approach to undermining the reader’s trust in a publication unfolds. The editors of *El Ómnibus* attack the seven liberal mandates with five footnotes that direct the reader’s attention first to the republished liberal text, then to the margins of the page where the article is critiqued. In this way, the editors of *El Ómnibus* use the materiality of the publication and its spatial organization to again interrupt the reading process and direct the reader’s attention to the object

of inquiry, then to the edges of the page where the true authority lies.

The first footnote corresponds to the article’s title and establishes a difference between *El Monitor*’s liberal rhetoric and the agency of the government: “We are intimately persuaded that the government, in spite of what is being said, will view with indignation the scandalous robbery that it is advised to perform”⁵⁸. The distinction is important as it marks a discursive space that is independent of the language of government and accessible to writers of all ideological persuasions. The second footnote addresses the first mandate, which declares that all church possessions will become property of the nation, independent of denomination. There, the writer underlines the declaration’s hypocrisy by stating that church goods will simply be transferred to the theologians of plunder or the “monitorianos,” those associated with the *El Monitor*. In the third footnote, the writer identifies specific typographic strategies that he associates with the manipulation of the reader. The footnote corresponds to the second mandate that states that anyone who recognizes capital associated with church property must declare that property in writing and pay to the national bank a three percent yield on said property. First, the writer claims that the offer to allow someone to withhold capital derived from church property is a lowly attempt to convert readers to liberalism. Second, and more importantly for the present study, the writer acknowledges the importance of the visualization of the offer, “and

⁵⁸ “Despojo de los bienes de la iglesia”, *El Ómnibus*, Oct. 22, 1851, 1. In the original, “Estamos íntimamente persuadidos de que el gobierno, á pesar de lo que se dice, vera con la mayor indignacion el escandaloso robo que se le aconseja”.

this bargain is written in large letters in order to stoke greed, to make the timid valiant, and to incite the stubborn. Let's agree that no one manages typography like the editors of *el Monitor*"⁵⁹. The attention to detail as it is displayed in the pages of the press indicates that the footnotes are a response to the enlarged print that aimed to entice the reader into a heightened sense of avarice, or even to transform the timid into the valiant. The transformative power of the visualization of print, however, does not communicate truth. Instead, that power is akin to artifice, or "the art of typography", that functions as an illusion for the reader.

The footnote is a less ostentatious visualization of discourse. It lies on the fringe on the principal document, distinguished only by a number that locates its reference point in the text. The footnote does not overwhelm the reader, it does not trigger the senses in the same way enlarged print or other rhetorical strategies might. Instead, the footnote appeals to intelligence and reason. As Anthony Grafton has observed, the footnote visualizes an intellectual endeavor that historicizes the contact point between events and ideas⁶⁰. The visual appearance of the footnote stands in for the critical thinking and investigation that made the note possible and it cements in the reader's mind the notion that the text they hold in their hands is authoritative and

legitimate⁶¹. The relationship between two texts that the footnote creates, then, is grounded in a hierarchy between text and proof. In other words, "[t]he appearance of footnotes... separates historical modernity from tradition"⁶². Expressed another way, the footnote is the visualization of modernity. In a curious way, the editors of *El Ómnibus* counter the liberal rhetoric in the article on church property by destroying it from the margins, by employing a modern discursive tactic, the footnote, to demonstrate the clash between modernity (the act of questioning of the political and economic legitimacy of the church) and tradition (the continued trust in the church). But the conservative writers also show that liberals are as yet unskilled in harnessing the power of the press; they are only able to enhance the reader's perceptions through typographic illusions devoid of truth.

It is important to remember that one of the important liberal reforms was the secularization of society, a goal that the press played a part in fulfilling. However, it is also key to remember that not all writers and editors used the press to secularize society. If the influx of new print technologies changed the way printers determined what to print, it also granted them new tools with which to defend their beliefs. If, as Goldgel states, "[t]he secularization of print allowed typographers to distract themselves from sermons,

⁵⁹ "Despojo de los bienes de la iglesia", *El Ómnibus*, Oct. 22, 1851, 1. In the original, "y esta ganga se escribe con letras grandes para avivar la codicia, dar valor al tímido, y llamar la atención a los necios. Convengamos en que nadie maneja el arte tipográfico como los redactores del Monitor".

⁶⁰ Anthony Grafton, "The footnote from De Thou to Ranke", in *History and Theory* 33/4 (Middletown 1994): 53.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 57.

devotional texts and patriotic catechism, proclamations and newspapers”⁶³, others used the new print technology to distract readers from adverse reading material and practices. The editors of *El Ómnibus* take a different approach to promoting faith and religion. They expressly attack the economic changes proposed in other, more liberal, publications, especially those related to property. In doing so, they incorporate modern publishing strategies, critique typographic practices that lead readers astray, and embrace the accelerated speed with which the press appears (by republishing recently published articles). In effect, they did not rely on more traditional publications to promote religion, such as the catechism and sermons mentioned above. Instead, they isolated and critiqued texts that challenged their worldview, and the critique was carried out first by reprinting a text, a modern practice possible only with the new print media, and second with the footnote, a modern method of establishing authority and demonstrating due diligence.

The conservative press in nineteenth-century Mexico engaged in a critical response to new print media, neither accepting nor rejecting it as a source of legitimacy. Instead, writers performed a critical adaptation⁶⁴ of media comprised of strategies that included interrupted reading, the construction of new archives, conservative interpretations of novelty, and the visualization of commerce. In this critical adaption, conservative publi-

cations expressed concern over accelerated print strategies, but also discovered ways to alter the velocity in order to promote their worldview. Thus, conservative publications accessed the novelty of media to promote traditions and to develop systems of contestation. There is not a categorical response to new print media in *El Espectador*, *El Universal*, and *El Ómnibus*. Instead, we see both points of contact between the publications and creative ways to impose distance.

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⁶³ Goldgel Carballo, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América...*, 50-51. In the original, “La secularización del mundo del impreso hizo que los tipógrafos pudiesen distraerse de sermones, devocionarios y catecismo con odas patrióticas, proclamas y periódicos”.

⁶⁴ I take this term from Thomas Genova who uses it to explain that Domingo Sarmiento did not passively imitate characteristics of US culture that he hoped to export to Argentina. See “Sarmiento’s Vida de Horacio Mann: translation, importation, and entanglement” in *Hispanic Review* 82/1 (Filadelfia 2014): 22.

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