Ink Under the Fingernails:
Making Print in Nineteenth-Century Mexico City

by

Corinna Zeltsman

Department of History
Duke University

Date: _________________________
Approved: _____________________

Jocelyn Olcott, Supervisor

John D. French

Peter Sigal

Sumathi Ramaswamy

Kathryn J. Burns

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History in the Graduate School of Duke University

2016
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation examines Mexico City’s material politics of print—the central actors engaged in making print, their activities and relationships, and the legal, business, and social dimensions of production—across the nineteenth century. Inside urban printshops, a socially diverse group of men ranging from manual laborers to educated editors collaborated to make the printed items that fueled political debates and partisan struggles in the new republic. By investigating how print was produced, regulated, and consumed, this dissertation argues that printers shaped some of the most pressing conflicts that marked Mexico’s first formative century: over freedom of expression, the role of religion in government, and the emergence of liberalism. Printers shaped debates not only because they issued texts that fueled elite politics but precisely because they operated at the nexus where new liberal guarantees like freedom of the press and intellectual property intersected with politics and patronage, the regulatory efforts of the emerging state, and the harsh realities of a post-colonial economy.

Historians of Mexico have typically approached print as a vehicle for texts written by elites, which they argue contributed to the development of a national public sphere or print culture in spite of low literacy levels. By shifting the focus to print’s production, my work instead reveals that a range of urban residents—from prominent printshop owners to government ministers to street vendors—produced, engaged, and deployed printed items in contests unfolding in the urban environment. As print increasingly functioned as a political weapon in the decades after independence, print production itself became an
arena in struggles over the emerging contours of politics and state formation, even as printing technologies remained relatively unchanged over time.

This work examines previously unexplored archival documents, including official correspondence, legal cases, business transactions, and printshop labor records, to shed new light on Mexico City printers’ interactions with the emerging national government, and reveal the degree to which heated ideological debates emerged intertwined with the most basic concerns over the tangible practices of print. By delving into the rich social and cultural world of printing—described by intellectuals and workers alike in memoirs, fiction, caricatures and periodicals— it also considers how printers’ particular status straddling elite and working worlds led them to challenge boundaries drawn by elites that separated manual and intellectual labors. Finally, this study engages the full range of printed documents made in Mexico City printshops not just as texts but also as objects with particular visual and material qualities whose uses and meanings were shaped not only by emergent republicanism but also by powerful colonial legacies that generated ambivalent attitudes towards print’s transformative power.
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This project attempts to uncover and understand the role of printers in the contested construction of independent Mexico. Printers’ handiwork forms one of the primary sources of evidence used by scholars of Mexican history, and yet printers are virtually invisible in historical narratives that privilege the genius of the individual author over the constellation of forces that wrestled ideas into material form for wider audiences. I arrived at this project along a path that meandered between academic research and artisanal training, shaped on some level by my own family legacies. Both of my grandfathers pursued long and different careers as printers, a fact that dawned on me just as I started getting interested in letterpress printing as an undergraduate. My mother’s father Robert trained as an engineer but became a participant in the flourishing arts and crafts movement in interwar Vienna before he fled Nazi persecution to establish a second printing business in New York. He was a type designer, bibliophile, and avid collector of antiquities: each week I visited him he would give me one tiny ancient bead or bauble, and encouraged me to start my own stamp and coin collections. My father’s father Izzy (or Issy or Issie) was a Romanian-born street kid with little formal education who became a typesetter, working in a Newark printshop that laid off its employees as desktop publishing reduced the need for job printers in the 1990s. He had the sharpest wit and was a master at wordplay who could turn any combination into something totally new. Izzy also apparently liked to wash the dishes so that he could scrub the ink out from under his fingernails. In some ways my grandfathers have influenced my thinking about
the characters whose activities I trace in this dissertation. I wish I could share this work with them, but at least I’ve got their ink in my blood.

My own experiences and education as a printer, which I pursued parallel to my studies in Latin American history, have also guided the direction of this project. I first learned letterpress printing as a summer intern in 2002 at the Center for Book Arts, a wonderful institution in New York that brings together artists, artisans, and book lovers from all around the world in its exuberant, sometimes chaotic workspace. There I found camaraderie over years of coming and going, and had many discussions about craft and design, the politics and economic realities of print production in the digital age, and misogyny and elitism in the world of books. I thank the entire community of the Center—and particularly Ana Cordeiro, Sarah Nicholls, and Roni Gross—for welcoming me into their ranks and sharing the mysteries of the craft with me.

At Wesleyan University, I developed my research interests as a Latin American Studies major. I had been captivated by learning Spanish in high school, and went off to college thinking I would study the history of Spain. James McGuire’s course on Latin American Politics upended my plans, and literature classes with Fernando Degiovanni sealed the deal. My undergraduate advisor, Ann Wightman, created a serious intellectual community in her seminars on Latin American history, and encouraged my research on a popular religious festival in La Paz, Bolivia. She also supported my attempt to combine interest in the book arts with my work as a historian and, with David Schorr, agreed to direct an interdisciplinary thesis that tried to put these two modes of inquiry into practice.
That project got me thinking critically about the relationship between form and the politics of representation in ways that continue to inform my research.

After working in arts administration for several years and getting into the printing scene in New York, I entered the history program at Duke because I wanted to learn more about how printing had functioned in Latin America, and all the narratives I had encountered focused narrowly on North Atlantic experiences. At Duke and in the Triangle I met a welcoming, intellectually engaged group of graduate students working on Latin American and Caribbean history. We exchanged ideas at organized events and through coursework, but I also benefitted immensely from our many informal conversations and interactions over the years. The graduate community in the Triangle is, I believe, uniquely supportive and stimulating, and I am grateful to colleagues Vanessa Freije, Angelica Castillo, Caroline Garriott, Gabriela Goldin, Christina Davidson, Justin Blanton, Ben Reed, Bryan Pitts, Elizabeth Shesko, Kristin Wintersteen, Danielle Terrazas-Williams, Robert Franco, Gray Kidd, Farren Yero, Aaron Colston, Michael Becker, Elsa Costa, Kristina Williams, and Travis Knoll for offering critical feedback, advice, and camaraderie.

Early on, I identified Mexico as the best site for carrying out a research project on the role of printers, given its centuries long legacy as a center of print production. As I began to develop the contours of my project, I benefitted from two grants for conducting pre-dissertation research in Mexico City provided by Duke’s Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Its director, Natalie Hartman, has been a champion of graduate
student work, and the center’s financial support was crucial for developing my project in its early stages. I also received support from the Duke History Department and Duke Graduate School to conduct summer research at several points over the course of my graduate career.

As my project took shape, I began to research printers’ activities in the long nineteenth century with greater focus. Thanks to a Mark Samuels Lasner Fellowship from the American Printing History Association, I was able to conduct research at Columbia University’s Rare Book and Manuscript Library, where Jane Siegel offered helpful suggestions on the history of the collections I examined. With generous support from the Duke Graduate School and a Mellon-International Dissertation Research Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council, I spent seventeen months working in archives and libraries in Mexico and the United States.

Throughout my time conducting archival research, I benefited from conversations with a number of scholars, based in both the U.S. and Mexico, as I developed my project. Patience Schell, Marie Eileen Francois, and Ted Beatty graciously offered advice over the phone, and Eric Van Young, Anne Staples, Carlos Illades, María Esther Pérez Salas, Erika Pani, and Gabriela Cano generously offered suggestions for readings and areas for investigation. Pablo Piccato provided encouragement and suggested new archival avenues to explore, and Eddie Wright-Rios pressed me to think big and articulate the stakes of my research project.
In Mexico City, I was fortunate to participate in two academic seminars. Laura Suárez de la Torre at the Instituto Mora invited me to join a seminar she had co-convened with Javier Rodríguez Piña, on the theme of “libros y lectores” in nineteenth-century Mexico. There, I found a dynamic community of scholars all grappling with issues related to the history of the book and print culture. Our monthly seminars were a welcome change from solitary research, and I benefitted immensely from our discussions. I particularly wish to thank Manuel Suárez Rivera, Kenya Bello, María Eugenia Chaoul Pereyra, Ana Cecilia Montiel, Aurea Maya, Olivia Moreno Gamboa, Freja Cervantes, and Othón Nava for their generosity in sharing ideas, tips, and readings, and for welcoming me into their scholarly community. I am also grateful to Marina Garone Gravier for inviting me to participate in the seminar on bibliography hosted by the Instituto de Investigaciones Bibliográficas at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Over many months of research in Mexico City institutions, I accrued countless debts to fellow researchers and archive staff. Like many others, I benefitted from meetings with Linda Arnold, who generously shared some of her databases with me and offered suggestions on how to navigate the city’s archival resources. I spent much of my time at the Archivo General de la Nación, where my days were brightened by chats with archive staff, who provided helpful assistance with impeccable professionalism. José Luis Camargo, Jonatan Tovar, Abel Juárez, and the rest of the AGN’s staff—especially in the Centro de Referencias—helped me navigate the archival maze and frequent requests for documents with particularly good humor. At the Archivo Histórico del Distrito Federal,
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In the summer of 2014, I visited several U.S.-based collections where library staff offered crucial assistance. At the Sutro Library in San Francisco, Angelica Illueca generously indulged my wildest book fantasies by allowing me to peruse the closed stacks containing a treasure of Mexican printed materials. Brief trips to the Bancroft Library yielded some surprising finds, thanks to advice from Theresa Salazar, who offered excellent tips for navigating the collection. At the University of Texas at Austin’s Benson Library, Michael Hironymous, Julianne Gilland and José Montelongo offered
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When I returned to Duke in 2015 to write, I was fortunate to re-engage an 
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At the Duke Latin American History Workshop organized by faculty members Jocelyn 
Olcott, John French, and Pete Sigal, I had the opportunity to present a draft of chapter
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With extremely generous support from a Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship, I was able to work on the dissertation full time during the 2015-2016 academic year. Participating in an interdisciplinary writing group at Duke, meanwhile, helped me sharpen my writing and articulate ideas for a broader audience. I’m thankful to Ashley Elrod, Steffen Kaupp, and Christina Rudosky for their insightful feedback and lively debate over how to craft arguments and make writing sing. Andrea Scapolo helped me make sense of Gramsci’s writings about organic intellectuals and think about how printers might challenge this category. In the day to day of graduate school, I owe particular thanks to Robin Pridgen, Staff Assistant for Graduate Studies in the history department, who provided the logistical support that made my academic career possible.

I could not have written this dissertation without the encouragement, support, and critical engagement of my incredible dissertation committee. From the early stages of
preliminary research and grant writing, John D. French helped me to develop my project and the language to convince myself and others of its importance. His insightful comments repeatedly cut to the heart of the matter and shaped my approach to this dissertation and Latin American history more broadly. Pete Sigal provided critical feedback throughout the process, suggesting theoretical readings, new avenues to explore in my writing, and offering teasing encouragement as I neared the final stages. Sumathi Ramaswamy introduced me to cross-disciplinary scholarship on visual studies and materiality, and has offered thought-provoking reflections on how historians can incorporate these methods into their own work. Kathryn Burns, who agreed to act as an outside reader, generously offered her time as I nerded out about archival details, and helped me when I first started articulating the broader arc of the dissertation as it took shape.

Above all, I am indebted to Jocelyn Olcott, who mentored me throughout the entire process. Jolie is truly a model dissertation advisor, who devoted countless hours to helping me make sense of my materials, reading everything I wrote from fragmentary research memos to half-baked drafts and discussing the implications in long meetings and one memorable walk around the East Campus trail. Always available and responsive, she also gave me space and encouragement to experiment along the way. Jolie brought her sharp critical eye to the project along with her sharp wit, and pushed me to articulate the stakes of my research early and often.
In Durham, I have been fortunate not only to have been part of a truly engaged community of scholars, but also to have formed friendships with so many amazing folks. Angelica Castillo, Caroline Garriott, Vanessa Freije, and Ashley Elrod have been close friends and collaborators. Over the years, they’ve read my work, helped me strategize, and made sure I didn’t take myself too seriously. Ameem Lutfi, Jon Free, Ryan Poe, Ashley Young, Mandy Hughett, Yuridia Ramírez, Stephanie Friede, Rochelle Rojas, Justin Blanton, Serkan Yoloçan, Sean Parrish, Andrew Ruoss, Danny Bessner, and Eladio Bobadilla have shared the ups and downs of grad school life with exceptionally good humor and pep talks.

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Introduction

Ten days after writer Pablo de Villavicencio published a pseudonymous pamphlet criticizing Mexico’s presidential administration in October of 1829, the governor of Mexico City ordered his arrest.1 Villavicencio’s jailing provoked uproar from supporters who demanded an investigation into the governor’s actions, which they argued violated freedom of the press.2 In a written petition submitted to high ranking officials, angry supporters focused attention not only on the governor’s orders, but also on the pamphlet’s site of production: a local imprenta, or printshop, which they suggested had fabricated the pamphlet’s authorship by adding Villavicencio’s nom de plume to the imprint without his knowledge.3 Unfolding in an era of political uncertainty in the first years after Mexico had achieved independence from Spain, the incident drew the attention of political commentators and the ire of the governor, who cast Villavicencio’s supporters as boozy rabble-rousers that had notoriously “obtained some [petition] signatures in exchange for drinks” in a public café.4 The governor contested the petitioners’ assertions about the

1 Villavicencio was a prolific pamphleteer known in print as El Payo del Rosario. In the first years after independence, he published scores of pamphlets and faced prison or exile four times. James C. McKegney, The Political Pamphlets of Pablo Villavicencio, "El Payo del Rosario", vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1975), V, IX. This pamphlet criticized the presidential administration of Vicente Guerrero for its dismissal of minister of finance Lorenzo de Zavala. Pablo de Villavicencio, ¡Pobre del señor Guerrero! Para de aquí al mes de enero (Mexico City: Imprenta del ciudadano Alejandro Valdés, 1829).
3 I translate the term imprenta as printshop, rather than printing house or printing office, for its ease of use.
4 Governor of Mexico City José María Tornel launched the counter-attack on the petitioners. Ibid., fol. 25. “café público;” “se convirtió en borrachera pues que se obtuvieron algunas firmas a cambio de copas.” The incident received comment in Carlos María de Bustamante’s political diary on October 18 and 28, 1829. Carlos María de Bustamante, ed. Diario histórico de México, 1822-1848 (Mexico City: El Colegio de México / Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2001).
legitimacy of the “apocryphal proclamation,” countering that activities in the printshop were all in order, and that he had personally conducted the investigation.

The arguments offered by the governor and his critics focused not only on official conduct—on whether or not the governor had upheld the rules of press freedom—but also raised the uncertain question of who was really responsible for the controversial imprint. In both cases, the arguments drew attention to the concrete practices involved in turning written texts into printed documents. These practices unfolded in the printshops of Mexico City and spilled into its streets, taverns, government buildings, bookshops and private homes, as residents and officials of the national government debated whether or not print could be trusted, and how this medium should function in the new republic. As print became increasingly enmeshed with politics during and after Mexico’s wars of independence (1810-20), concerns over the power and danger of the medium gained public attention in high profile incidents such as Villavicencio’s imprisonment. Such incidents laid bare the fact that print production itself lay under the very noses of government officials—in printshops located just steps from the national palace and municipal headquarters—yet simultaneously just outside the realm of official control or public scrutiny.

Inside Mexico City’s printshops, a socially diverse group of men ranging from manual laborers to educated editors collaborated to make the printed items that fueled political debates and partisan struggles in the new republic. Rarely recognized by the city’s narrow group of lettered elites, printshop workers nevertheless labored at the center of the dynamic and contentious world of knowledge production that emerged alongside
Mexico’s 1821 independence from Spain. In earnest or bitingly satirical broadsides, pamphlets, and newspapers, intellectuals and political elites proposed competing visions of how government and society should function in Mexico’s post-colonial context, reworking and disputing new liberal notions of “rights,” “responsibility,” “public,” and “liberty,” and critiquing those holding power. Unlike in North Atlantic contexts, where a growing urban middle class eagerly devoured an expanding range of political printed materials, however, Mexico City’s writers and printers operated in spite of the fact that a broad bourgeois market for print simply did not exist. Even as late as 1895—according to imperfect government statistics compiled seventy-four years after independence—only 17% of Mexicans were literate. While literacy rates were highest in Mexico City, the colonial and national capital, typical print runs for newspapers and pamphlets throughout much of the nineteenth century ranged between 500 and 1,000 copies, and the price of a simple imprint easily surpassed an unskilled laborer’s daily wages.

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7 Even the cheapest political imprint—a single four-page newspaper edition—in 1835, cost 2 reales, which might equal a full day’s pay for an unskilled worker. My estimate of typical print runs is based on examining scattered accounting records for government and private imprints, consulted in the AGN and the Sutro Library. Print runs rarely exceeded 2,000 copies until after midcentury. Lynda Spielman estimates that print runs for pamphlets in the early republic ranged between 300 and 500 copies. Lynda Carol
Scholars have long relied upon printed texts to examine the intense high-level political debates that shaped the emergence of liberalism across Mexico’s long nineteenth century, which swept up not only elites, the military, and the Catholic Church (the nation’s largest landowner) but also popular urban and rural groups in often violent struggle. Yet they have overlooked the exceedingly intimate circumstances in which print itself was made and have neglected the medium’s symbolic dimensions and function within a predominantly illiterate society. In order to understand how print shaped politics and broader social and cultural change, I argue, we need to shift our gaze from the printed page and examine Mexico City’s material politics of print—the central actors engaged in making print, their activities and relationships, and the legal, business, and social dimensions of production—in all their inky detail.

By investigating how print was produced, regulated, and consumed in the urban core across the nineteenth century, this dissertation argues that printers shaped some of the most pressing conflicts that marked Mexico’s first formative century not only because they issued texts that fueled elite politics but precisely because they operated at the nexus where new liberal guarantees like freedom of the press and intellectual property intersected with politics and patronage, the regulatory efforts of the emerging state, and the harsh realities of a post-colonial economy. Ideas, actions, and objects converged in Mexico City’s printshops. Peopled by workers who labored in a virtually all-male environment of jocular camaraderie marked by internal social hierarchies, printshops

Spielman, "Mexican Pamphleteering and the Rise of the Mexican Nation, 1808-1830" (PhD Diss., Indiana University, 1975), 7.
were spaces not only where multiple masculinities intermingled, but also where the clear boundaries separating manual and intellectual labor blurred as written texts acquired new printed form.  

Writer Pablo de Villavicencio had first-hand knowledge of the city’s protagonists and landscape of print—with printshops and booksellers that overwhelmingly concentrated in the urban core surrounding the zócalo and cathedral—and its particular sights, sounds, and smells. When he visited the printshop of Alejandro Valdés to publish his pamphlet in 1829, he may have inhaled or pinched his nose against the smell of ink, bleach, and the urine used to soften leather inking balls. The murmur of workers’ voices proofreading a document might have drifted from the shop floor, as Villavicencio exchanged gossip with the printshop’s administrator, the typesetter José María Gallegos, or discussed a new legal regulation that held not only authors but also printers and publishers responsible for the texts they issued. The two men might have speculated about how such regulations would actually be applied on the ground as they planned a publishing strategy, attuned to the fact that the printshop stood just steps away from the National Palace.

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10 Sutro Library, Mexican Manuscripts, SMMS HG 1:6. A loose letter dated January 13, 1832 names the location of Valdés’s shop at the corner of Tacuba and Santo Domingo. The street names are confirmed with the "Plano General de la Ciudad de México. Levantado por el Teniente Coronel Don Diego García Conde
For centuries, Mexico City’s printshops had clustered in the urban center. This concentration evokes Uruguayan literary theorist Angel Rama’s influential work *The Lettered City*, which posits that writing constituted authority and official power in colonial and national Latin America. Rama argues that *letrados*—men of letters, especially government functionaries like notaries, scribes, and bureaucrats—enacted governance from within the planned central urban grid by wielding writing as a quasi mystical tool of power in largely illiterate societies. These functionaries were not mindless vessels for government power but its “intellectual producers, who elaborate (rather than merely transmitting) ideological messages, the designers of cultural models raised up for public conformity.”\(^{11}\) Although Rama highlights the dual centrality of material practices and symbolic meaning in constituting authority and knowledge, his work fails to account for print or its producers—an omission that erases the key role of plebeians, from typesetters to press operators to mule keepers, in sustaining the “lettered city.”\(^{12}\)

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11 Angel Rama, *The Lettered City*, trans. John Chasteen (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 22. Rama’s emphasis. Although highly influential in recent studies of the role of writing during the colonial era, Rama’s work has received less attention from scholars of post-independence Latin America. Rama emphasizes continuity across Latin American independence, while other scholars view independence as a moment of rupture. See, for example, Franco, “En espera de una burgesía,” 21-36.

12 Indeed, Rama’s argument for the nineteenth century completely overlooks printers in favor of journalists, whom he understands as the inheritors of the colonial *letrado* legacy. His careful attention to material practices in the colonial era does not carry through in his analysis of republican Latin America. Rama’s provocative scheme has been amended by historians of colonial Latin America (in particular, of the Andes region) who argue that a much wider swath of actors, including indigenous and African-descended peoples, sometimes in rural settings, participated in the enactment of the “lettered city.” See, for example Alcira Dueñas, *Indians and Mestizos in the “Lettered City”: Reshaping Justice, Social Hierarchy, and Political Culture in Colonial Peru* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2010); Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins, *Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes* (Durham: Duke University Press,
In fact, print and its makers figured prominently in governance and urban daily life. With the printing press introduced in Mexico City in 1539, the medium had long served as a technology of colonial power, used to convey royal and religious authority and as a centralized tool of administration, evangelization, and education. Promulgated printed decrees from Spain arrived in Mexico City where they were re-printed and displayed in urban centers or referenced from church pulpits around the viceregal territory and as far afield as the Philippines. By the late eighteenth century, print also offered a forum for developing intellectual life among local elites who participated in the scientific, religious, and literary debates of the Spanish American Enlightenment. Yet while print’s uses had gradually expanded in the decades before Mexico achieved independence from Spain, it was immediately taken up for political purposes during the wars of independence, and as an integral component of political life under freedom of the press legislation in the new republic.

Under freedom of the press—established just before independence and ratified by subsequent governments—new printed genres like polemical pamphlets and satirical broadsides appeared in the city streets, raising the stakes of political debates. The flurry


14 Olivia Moreno Gamboa, "La imprenta y los autores novohispanos. La transformación de una cultura impresa colonial bajo el régimen borbónico (1701-1821)" (PhD diss., Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2013).
of publications challenged government officials to develop legal and extralegal tactics for managing critique and dissent, and printers bore the brunt of government efforts to regulate and control knowledge production. Anonymous imprints particularly enraged officials eager to uncover a familiar adversary behind a mysterious pseudonym, and weak markets ensured that printers had a stake in promoting controversy and polemic, juggling ideals with mercenary profit-seeking. As debates over whether or not republicanism could be implemented successfully in Mexico’s post-colonial context hardened after the first decades of the nineteenth century, Mexico City printers took up overtly partisan positions and used imprints to tangle with rivals, even provoking powerful institutions like the church by publishing overtly anti-Catholic novels.

The messy quotidian realities of print production and consumption inspired distrust towards printers among those in power, yet fearful attitudes coexisted with elites’ dependence on print as a marker of civilization and social status, and the aspirations of an impoverished state barely able to cover the costs of its own official printing. This fetishization can be identified in early bibliographical compilations—like an 1854 essay titled *Tipografía mexicana* prepared by conservative Mexican scholar Joaquín García Icazbalceta for a local encyclopedia edition—that traced intellectual history as a series of locally printed milestones stretching back to the era of conquest.\(^\text{15}\) Seen from the streets, however, printed items were ephemeral yet symbolically potent objects that circulated within or were continuously fixed upon the urban environment in layers that developed in

\(^{15}\) Joaquín García Icazbalceta, "Tipografía Mexicana," in *Diccionario universal de historia y de geografía*, ed. Lucas Alamán (Mexico City: Imp. de F. Escalente y Ca.; Librería de Andrade, 1854), 961-977.
thick crusts of overlapping paper, ink, and paste layered onto the sides of buildings near busy intersections.

Elite myths about the dangerous potential of print crystalized in conservative statesman Lucas Alamán’s 1851 historical analysis of the causes of Mexico’s independence, amongst which he counted printed pamphlets that “contributed much to augment this agitation of spirits, with the strangest titles and in which, in the style best suited to make an impression on the masses, incited them to revolution.” The conservative myth of mass incitement found its counterpart in the liberal formula that cast print as a tool of education or weapon of freedom against religious fanaticism and backwardness. Liberal printers themselves highlighted their own roles in heroic terms, describing the printing press as “the angel of Progress” that could transform tradition-bound societies into modern ones.

On the ground, however, principled positions clashed with socioeconomic realities. Poor Mexico City residents including working women, children, and the blind, most likely engaged print as street vendors. Servants swept shop floors and distributed printed materials throughout the city. The first U.S. envoy to Mexico, Joel Poinsett,

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16 Lucas Alamán, Historia de México desde los primeros momentos que prepararon su independencia en el año de 1808 hasta la época presente, vol. IV (Mexico City: Imprenta de J. M. Lara, calle de la Palma num 4, 1851), 41. “Contribuían mucho a aumentar esta agitación de los espíritus, los folletos que cada día se publicaban en uso de la libertad de imprenta, con los títulos mas extraños y en los cuales, en el estilo mas propio para hacer impresión en el pueblo, se le excitaba á la revolución....” Also quoted in Jesús Reyes Heroles, El liberalismo Mexicano: los orígenes, vol. 1 (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional de México, Facultad de Derecho, 1957), 39.


18 On reading conceived as a multifaceted urban experience, see David M. Henkin, City Reading: Written Words and Public Spaces in Antebellum New York (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
described seeing “men clothed in the garb of extreme poverty, reading the Gazettes in the streets” after an 1822 visit. Yet ordinary residents—as Villavicencio’s case reveals—most likely encountered and discussed imprints in communal settings like workshops or cafés, where ideas, political positions, social horizons, and drinking intermingled.

By understanding how print production functioned in its urban environment, this dissertation reveals the central role played by printers in constructing—and contesting—the boundaries of the “lettered city” in nineteenth century Mexico. Just as Kathryn Burns has argued that “we need to go into the archive, deeply into the conditions of its making” in order to evaluate the contents of written records produced by notaries in colonial Peru, I argue that we must enter the printshop in order to understand just how print and its makers shaped republican politics, power, and the development of liberalism. Far from a linear process in which a gradually expanding print culture constructed a hegemonic idea of national identity shared across social lines, print production itself became an arena for struggles over the emerging contours of politics, the state, and society. Heated ideological debates—especially over the principles of liberalism and how they should function in a Mexican context—intertwined with the most material concerns over the tangible practices of print, and whether or not its protagonists’ activities should or could be channeled or controlled. These material politics informed how Mexico City residents

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19 Joel Roberts Poinsett, Notes on Mexico, made in the autumn of 1822; accompanied by an historical sketch of the Revolution, and translations of official reports on the present state of that country (New York: Praeger, 1969), 83.

and national officials understood and engaged broader debates and offer a new point of departure for understanding the emergence of liberalism during Mexico’s first half-century of state formation: as it formed on the printshop floor.

**Inside Mexico City’s World of Print Production**

The 1829 case of Pablo de Villavicencio exemplifies how the uncertainties of printing intertwined with politics, generating suspicion towards printers and their places of business. As Villavicencio’s text (apocryphal or not) transformed into an imprint, it passed through many hands in various forms. Its contents, furthermore, were seen and discussed along the way by a diverse group of individuals who brought their impressions and interpretations out with them into the city streets when the printshop closed for the night, or after they completed a *velada*, an evening shift. Inside printshops, intellectuals, public writers, priests, and ministers rubbed elbows with shop owners, typesetters, press operators and other print workers, all of whom might lay claim to the title of *printer* (impresor), a term used as much by shop owners as “common to all the craftsmen or workers [of the art], as much compositors or *cajistas*, as pressman or *tiradores*, because for the effect of the impression all are necessary: the study and skill of some, and the care and strength of others.”

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21 Juan Josef Sigüenza y Vera, *Mecanismo del arte de la imprenta para facilidad de los operarios que le exerzan* (Madrid: Imprenta de la Compañía, 1811), 8. “El nombre *impresor*, aunque tomado de la última operación del arte, que es imprimir, con todo eso es común á todos los artífices ó oficiales de ella, así compositores ó *cajistas*, como prensistas ó *tiradores*; porque para el efecto de la impresión todo es necesario, el estudio y destreza de unos, y el cuidado y las fuerzas de los otros.”
With mules powering large presses (by midcentury) and ink, grease, and solvents potentially everywhere, knowledge production was a gritty and pungent business. Some printers worked furiously to keep their shops and workers clean, orderly, and respectable. Novels and memoirs written by elite observers and former journalists, however, highlighted the lively experience, political intrigue, and the fact of social diversity inside the printshop. The nature of the work and its motley cast of characters, however, generated a degree of ambivalence captured in critical appraisals, fictional portrayals, and memoirs alike. Intellectuals occasionally described printers in print, using their marginally more privileged positions to offer appraisals blending political viewpoints with often subtly scornful characterizations of the printers upon whom they depended. Describing top printers as “very ignorant” or “incorrect, undisciplined, impetuous” redrew the sketchy lines of status in the field of intellectual production and diminished printers’ aspirations.

In the daily rhythms of printshop life, however, social boundaries blurred. Journalist-turned-politician Emilio Rabasa’s 1888 novel El cuarto poder described the

22 Trade manuals emphasized that individual work stations should be kept clean. Ibid., 29. A set of rules for the printshop of Ignacio Cumplido revealed a perhaps excessive preoccupation with personal cleanliness. After the U.S. actress Anna Bishop paid Cumplido a visit while touring Mexico, she took special note of the fastidious neatness of the living quarters arranged for each printer on the premises, outfitted with individual toiletry kits including nail brushes. Ignacio Cumplido, Reglamento provisional del establecimiento de imprenta situado en la Calle de los Rebeldes Num. 2, el cual es propiedad del ciudadano Ignacio Cumplido (Mexico City: Imprenta del Propietario, 1843); Anna Bishop, Travels of Anna Bishop in Mexico (Philadelphia: Charles Deal, 1849), 69.

23 See, for example, García Icazbalceta, “Tipografía Mexicana,” 961-977.

tenuous line separating writers’ creative labors from the less dignified manual work performed by typesetters. As the novel’s journalist protagonists find themselves sitting around the editorial tables clipping out newspaper fragments to be reprinted or churning out articles on demand, the protagonist complains, “we worked like scribes, not like writers; we were not artists, but rather workers.”

The journalist-turned-diplomat Federico Gamboa, on the other hand, recounted his time as a writer in the printshop of Filomeno Mata through a rose-tinted lens in his 1893 memoir. Gamboa reveled in his friendships with fellow writers and lower status typesetters, whom he fondly derided as “the most vice-ridden workers in spite of their continuous brush with elevated theories, [and] humanitarian and progressive ideas.” While he gained street credibility recounting tales of his friendship with Aurelio Garay, a typesetter who had risen through the ranks to become an editor on his own merits, Gamboa also exposed the self-taught editor’s ongoing struggles to master the basic rules of grammar.

The commentaries written by journalists like Rabasa and Gamboa offer a window into the world of the printshop, where social horizons intersected as handwritten texts were converted into printed materials. In these accounts, individuals are drawn together as they transform from typesetters into editors or from unknown scribblers into renowned journalists. Such narratives offered romanticized visions of transformation even as they

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reinscribed some of the social hierarchies they initially purported to dissolve. In doing so, they spoke to a broader uneasiness over the relationships and practices—themselves sites of social struggle—that constituted printshop life during a moment of significant political transformation.  

What were the broad outlines of the practices and relationships that formed the rhythms of printshop life? The Villavicencio case offers an opportunity to sketch them out and lay the groundwork for an exploration of the material politics of print. If the jailed pamphleteer Villavicencio had indeed authored his pamphlet and prepared it for publication, he would likely have started by bringing the manuscript to a local printshop. Whether or not the author could choose his preferred place of publication likely depended on his creditworthiness or, lacking this, the chance his manuscript might generate profits. Having access to a network of political patronage could also help. Since arriving in Mexico City from Sinaloa (on Mexico’s western coast) in 1822, in fact, the young outsider Villavicencio had spread his business all around town, patronizing a rotating cast of fifteen printshops over the years, likely because he owed money at every shop.  

As he built his reputation, Villavicencio solidified his printing preferences, choosing the venerable and better-equipped shops founded in the colonial era.

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27 On how artisans adopted and adapted republicanism to challenge social hierarchies, see Sarah C. Chambers, From Subjects to Citizens: Honor, Gender, and Politics in Arequipa, Peru, 1780-1854 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Inigo L. Garcia-Bryce, Crafting the Republic: Lima’s Artisans and Nation Building in Peru, 1821-1879 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004).

While the writer may have entrusted a servant to bring his manuscript to the printshop, he more likely made the journey from his home over to the storied business of Alejandro Valdés, located on the corner of Tacuba and Santo Domingo streets, just across from the cathedral and one block off the central zócalo. There, he would have been greeted upon arrival to the front of the establishment by the shop’s administrator, José María Gallegos, from whom he learned the latest print-related gossip. Valdés’s office had recently printed a series of Villavicencio’s dialogues, and the two men may have talked over his sales or other ongoing business. Perhaps they discussed new government regulations that redefined the category of legal responsibility for imprints, or speculated on how these rules would actually be enforced.  

As the overseer in a shop whose owner was frequently absent, Gallegos acted as the public front for the business. Interacting with authors, he would work out the details of the printing job, offering an estimate based on the costs of typesetting, number of copies ordered, and paper costs. Gallegos most likely based his calculations on a shop price list calculated around standard batches of 500 copies, a typical print run for nineteenth century Mexico City. A four-page pamphlet like the one used to accommodate Villavicencio’s text would have cost between seven and fourteen pesos, depending on the type size used.  

Even the production of this modest pamphlet cost the equivalent of

29 Discussed in the September 4, 1829 diaries of Bustamante, *Diario histórico de México, 1822-1848*.  
30 Not all printshop owners entrusted business operations to administrators, but in many cases (especially in larger businesses) administrators ran daily operations. On the role of administrators, see: Antonio Serra y Oliveres, *Manual de la tipografía española o sea el arte de la imprenta* (Madrid: E. Oliveres, 1852), 297-337.  
31 See, for example an 1828 list of “precios corrientes” submitted to government officials, AGN, Gobernación, legajo 139, exp. 11. “Nota de precios corrientes de imprenta,” unnumbered.
several weeks’ pay for an unskilled worker.\textsuperscript{32} A skilled administrator like Gallegos—who sometimes supplemented his wages by filling in as a typesetter—earned only one peso per day, a bit more than a novice writer but a fraction of the total cost of the pamphlet’s production.\textsuperscript{33}

Printers and authors worked out a variety of payment structures to finance publishing, with printers often underwriting production costs and soliciting subscriptions for more ambitious projects. As a repeat customer in good standing, Villavicencio might have left the shop without paying anything in advance. Perhaps the well-known author would receive a set number of copies to distribute amongst friends and patrons, while the printshop would sell the remaining copies through an affiliated bookseller.\textsuperscript{34} Any earnings could then be applied toward the printing costs, and profits shared by the printer and the author. Maybe, unwilling to take a chance on a risky political pamphlet, the printshop would require the author to pay up front.

If the administrator Gallegos followed the dictates of constantly fluctuating press laws, he would have requested that Villavicencio sign his name in the printer’s log,

\textsuperscript{32} Unskilled workers averaged .25 to .5 pesos per day, while skilled workers earned .5 to 1 peso. Wasserman calculates the daily cost of subsistence at .75 to 1 peso. Mark Wasserman, \textit{Everyday Life and Politics in Nineteenth Century Mexico: Men, Women, and War} (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 40.

\textsuperscript{33} Sutro Library, Mexican MSS SMMS HG1:9, Loose account records from the Abadiano (formerly Valdés) printshop from 1836 show Gallegos’ daily wages. One page denotes a seven-day workweek with seven circles, and another week’s \textit{raya} (pay sheet) lists Gallegos among the typesetters. Statesman Guillermo Prieto, who worked as a journalist in Ignacio Cumplido’s printshop, received 22 pesos, 4 reales for a month’s worth of articles. Guillermo Prieto, \textit{Memoria de mis tiempos 1828 a 1853} (Puebla: Editorial José M. Cajica Jr., 1970), 353.

\textsuperscript{34} Such an agreement was used in the publication of a pamphlet by Carlos María de Bustamante. Sutro Library, SMMS box 5, HG 10, Abadiano A/C Recievable and Printing Charges 1839, January 18, 1839 receipt.
taking responsibility for the imprint. Even though the new 1829 regulations suggested that the printer might also be considered responsible for imprints, Gallegos agreed to print the author’s pamphlet, most likely after reviewing its contents or consulting with his employer. After logging the estimate, Gallegos might head to the printshop’s composition room, where a group of typesetters would be working at—or chatting during or in between—various jobs. At a large shop like Valdés’s, typesetters would likely have worked in a room separated from the front office and the printing presses, whose metal parts might be heard squeaking in the background. Standing in front of the wooden cabinets that stored cases of metal printing type, the typesetters might squint at a sheet of hand-written copy—perhaps impaled on a nail at eye-level and illuminated by candlelight—as they composed the text of some scribbled political tract, funeral oration, or social notice.

Perhaps Gallegos assigned Villavicencio’s job to an idle typesetter who had not yet left work for the day, or maybe he waited until the next morning when those who showed up to work received their daily assignments. As the administrator, Gallegos bore responsibility for maintaining harmonious work relations inside the shop, and task distributions influenced shop dynamics. Being a small job, Gallegos likely assigned it to a single typesetter, who picked up the written copy with fingers engrained with traces of the dried film of ink that clung to well-used lead type. Maybe the typesetter scanned the piece from start to finish, making sure he could decipher the author’s cramped or

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sprawling script. Perhaps he jumped right into his work, reading the copy as one hand darted between the compartments of the type case, depositing a line of text into the composing stick grasped in his other hand, one piece of type at a time.

Typesetters had ample time to read while undertaking the labor of composition. As he set the type, the typesetter composing Villavicencio’s pamphlet may have meditated on each individual word or taken in a longer phrase: the eye could decipher the handwriting a bit faster than the hand could keep up. Paid by the piece, the typesetter had little incentive to linger, however. Maybe he fell into a trance, or his mind drifted, leading him to substitute one word for another, half-remembered. Perhaps he put down his composing stick—maybe in the moment when he transferred a batch of accumulated lines of type onto the nearby galley tray for storage—and commented to his peers in the composition room about the gist and his opinion of the latest “papel público.”

Over the course of a day or two—or maybe longer if the shop was particularly busy—the four forms of type re-creating the author’s text accumulated on the typesetter’s galleys. Once completed, he—or a specially dedicated typesetter in charge of imposition—would arrange these four blocks of type within one or two metal frames, or chases, for proofing. The layout having been determined, the typesetter would affix the forms of type into the chase and carry them at the appointed time to the pressroom, where a number of printing presses stood, attended by a press operator, an inker, and possibly an apprentice. The presses themselves may have been the oldest items in the shop. While

the printer might have ordered new iron hand presses from the United States, the shop’s stock likely still included a number of wooden common presses with metal parts—fabricated in Spain—dating back to the colonial era.\footnote{Sutro Library, MMS, HG 1:13, “Balance y entrega que hizo Don Francisco Antonio Santiago a Don Alejandro Valdez de la Imprenta, Librería y demas anexos pertenecientes a la Testamentaria de Doña María Fernández de Jauregui,” 1817. Valdés had acquired the printshop of the Jáuregui family that dated back to another seventeenth century printing dynasty run by the Rivera family. Edward N. Wright-Rios, \textit{Searching for Madre Matiana: Prophecy and Popular Culture in Modern Mexico} (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014), 66. The inventory is also transcribed in Manuel and Marina Garone Gravier Suárez Rivera, "Balance y entrega de la imprenta de María Fernández de Jáuregui a Alejandro Valdés en 1817 y su importancia para el estudio de la cultura tipográfica del periodo de la imprenta manual," \textit{Estudios de Historia Novohispana} 53 (2015): 79-89.}

The author almost certainly entrusted the particulars of his pamphlet’s design, and perhaps even its final wording, to the printshop staff. Typesetters, perhaps in concert with the administrator, would decide on the item’s layout based on the length of the text and paper size. Before finalizing the job, printers would take a proof, a one-off impression made from the type and reviewed internally (and perhaps by the author) for correction and approval. A proof might look quite similar to the final product, or be arranged more haphazardly on some waste paper. (Figure 1) Working as a team, a typesetter and proofreaders would compare the new imprint to the original text, reading aloud to check for typos and marking the copy’s errors to be fixed and proofed a second time. Such activity contributed to the printshop’s unique soundscape: in his memoir, Federico Gamboa described with fond condescension the “stuttering of the typesetter who read aloud as we corrected” late into the night.\footnote{Gamboa, \textit{Impresiones y recuerdos}, 64. “el tartamudeo del cajista que leía en alto mientras nosotros corríamos.”}
Press operators, for their part, approached the pamphlet from a different perspective. In 1829, a team of two individuals would have operated the hand presses, with one individual responsible for inking the typographic forms and the other tasked with laying down a dampened sheet of paper in the proper position, rolling the press carriage back under the platen and lowering the platen by pulling the press’s lever with
force. 39 By midcentury, printers began importing mechanical presses, as well as man- and motor-powered jobbing presses that sped the rate of production. 40 As the ones responsible for the quality of the printed surface, printers might scan the imprint to check for evenness, evaluating the item as a field of mottled black on white with varying degrees of tone. In smaller printshops, imprints could come out dreadfully uneven due to reliance on old type and worn machinery, acquired second-hand. Better shops, however, offered more regular-looking products.

Once sheets had been printed on both sides and dried, they would be folded if necessary in half or quarters. The labor of folding and, in the case of more substantial pamphlets or books, binding might take place inside the printshop or be outsourced to a bookbinder. While typesetters and press operators were positions exclusively filled by men, women sometimes worked as bookbinders, especially by the turn of the twentieth century when the printing trades expanded. 41 Large shops maintained the bindery separated from the printshop, keeping men and women apart and keeping finished products clean. Yet smaller operations crammed binders and printers together in the same space, or simply outsourced binding work altogether. 42 Villavicencio’s controversial text,

42 A ledger from the Abadiano bookshop from the 1840s-50s contains accounting for outsourcing bookbinding to both male and female binders. Sutro Library Mexican MSS SMMS HG 1:5.
composed as it was of four forms of type, had been printed on both sides of a single sheet of paper and folded simply in half to produce a simple, untrimmed pamphlet.\textsuperscript{43}

Within a day of its October 17th printing, Villavicencio’s pamphlet had circulated in Mexico City. Residents might have purchased the item by visiting the printshop itself, or by perusing the bookshops and mobile stands located in the arcades lining the zócalo, just around the corner from Valdés’s shop.\textsuperscript{44} Perhaps they received a copy delivered directly by the author himself, or purchased one from a street vendor, like the “blind man from the arcade,” who sometimes distributed copies for the printshop.\textsuperscript{45} By the 18th, an uneventful Sunday, the pamphlet had called the attention of political observers like Carlos María de Bustamante, who described it as a \textit{papasal}, or childish game, surely written by the disgraced minister of finance Lorenzo de Zavala (under cover of Villavicencio’s authorship) to rehabilitate his reputation, damaged after president Vicente Guerrero dismissed Zavala from his administration.\textsuperscript{46}

The child’s play took a more serious turn after the Governor of Mexico City ordered Villavicencio’s arrest on the 28th, and the author’s supporters, led by congressman Anastacio Zerecero, promised to submit a complaint.\textsuperscript{47} Over the following

\textsuperscript{43} On the various ways in which printers (in the British context) organized the arrangement of printed forms on the page for the most efficient printing, see Gaskell, \textit{A New Introduction to Bibliography}, 84-117.


\textsuperscript{45} Sutro Library, Mexican MSS SMMS HG 1, Folder 7 “Cuaderno [illeg] se lleva la cuenta que se les entrega en reales a los autores de los Papelese que se imprimen en esta oficina y de los exemplares que quedan para expenderse.”

\textsuperscript{46} See entry from October 18, 1829 Bustamante, \textit{Diario histórico de México, 1822-1848}.

\textsuperscript{47} AGN, Gobernación, legajo 86, exp. 2, “Libertad de Imprenta 1829, Fojas 42”, fol. 7.
week, Zerecero gathered signatures from supporters, members of a liberal political faction known as the Yorkinos (organized around the York Masonic lodge) whom the observer Bustamante exasperatedly described as “degenerate riffraff,” and lodged and publicized his denouncement against the governor on November 7th.\textsuperscript{48} The petition accused the governor of violating law and custom by hauling Villavicencio off to jail in the dead of night, and by accepting a potential printshop subterfuge as reliable evidence. Even president Guerrero himself, they reasoned, had been a recent victim of a similar setup, after “an apocryphal proclamation … appeared under Your Excellency’s name subscribed with the printed initials of your name and surname.”\textsuperscript{49} The governor, called to account for his actions, claimed he had seen Villavicencio’s signature in the printer’s log with his own eyes, and painted his accusers as people of no consequence at best, and outright lowlifes at worst. With petitioners and the governor disputing whether freedom of the press laws had been violated and if the printshop had committed a treacherous fraud, critics of the Guerrero government like Bustamante delighted as the increasingly divided administration descended further into factionalism.

The appearance of and fallout over controversial or polemical materials linked the daily rituals of printshop life, structured by its divisions of labor and social hierarchies, to politics unfolding in the nation’s capital and beyond. Variations on this drama—in which politics and print production became inexorably intertwined, upping the stakes of the

\textsuperscript{48} See entry from November 7, 1829 Bustamante, \textit{Diario histórico de México, 1822-1848}.
\textsuperscript{49} AGN, Gobernación, legajo 86, exp. 2, “Libertad de Imprenta 1829, Fojas 42”, fol. 16. “También apareció una proclama apocrifa, bajo el nombre de V.E. subscríta con las iniciales de su nombre y apellido.”
game—replayed time and again in the decades after Mexico’s independence. Printshops became sites not simply of outward-flowing dissemination, but also where officials and protesters alike would direct attentions as they engaged in political struggles with sometimes far-reaching consequences.

If printshops were places where politics were channeled, redirected, and scrutinized, they were also spaces where international technological developments and styles took hold in a local context. After independence, the local printing sector developed new ties to trading partners in the North Atlantic, made possible by the collapse of the Spanish empire.\textsuperscript{50} Mexico’s independence coincided roughly with the start of a period of industrialization and expansion in the international printing industry. While new printing technologies like mechanical presses and inking rollers sped production rates, their adoption in Mexico—where capital was in short supply—did not follow a clear linear path. Residing far from the centers where press and type manufacture were undergoing this transformation, Mexico City printers developed a range of strategies to acquire materials from abroad, particularly from the United States through connections with merchants, intellectuals, and diplomats who routinely crossed the Gulf of Mexico.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{51} Thus, the printer Valdés enlisted Mariano Velazquez de la Cadena, a Mexican grammarian who in 1830 had been appointed to Columbia University’s Spanish department, to help him establish commercial relationships with U.S. Type foundries. Sutro, Mexican Manuscripts, HG 1:6. Draft of January 13, 1832 letter. Businessmen like William Parrott, William Stewart, and Juan de la Granja connected Mexico City printers with supplies, and also participated in politics as U.S. consuls or (in the Spaniard Granja’s case) temporary representatives of Mexican governent. On Parrott’s political career, see Ethel Sadie Farabee, "William Stuart Parrott, Business Man and Diplomat in Mexico" (MA thesis, University of Texas, 1944). Granja’s surviving letters are published as Juan de la Granja, \textit{Epistolario; con un estudio biográfico preliminar por Luis Castillo Ledón y notas de Nereo Rodríguez Barragán} (Mexico City: Talleres Gráficos
Other printers simply clipped out the pages of catalogues—against the advice of the foundries, who wanted customers to order again—and mailed them to New York to order the type and illustrations that would stock their shops. (Figure 2)

![Figure 2: Detail, letter ordering type with the aid of catalogue clippings sent to the Hoe Company in New York. Source: Columbia University Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Hoe Company Records, Box 16, Incoming Letter File, 9-17 July 1878.](image)

Importing materials presented Mexico City printers with a number of challenges. Orders might be delayed by naval blockades, arrive damaged or incorrectly filled, or

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never appear at all.\textsuperscript{52} Manufacturers had to provide instructions on how to assemble their products. (Figure 3) Broken equipment had to be fixed by local craftsmen on an ad hoc basis.\textsuperscript{53} While Mexican officials exempted printing equipment from import tariffs to facilitate technology transfer, they taxed imported paper—the most essential and costly daily printshop supply—in a bid to protect Mexico’s nascent paper industry.\textsuperscript{54} Printers complained bitterly about paper tariffs across the nineteenth century, but could not reverse government policy.\textsuperscript{55} Yet printers navigated these circumstances with ingenuity and, by midcentury, highlighted the lengths they would go to provide customers with quality imprints.

\textsuperscript{52} Letters sent by Latin American and (U.S.-based printers) to the Richard M. Hoe and Company, a New York-based press manufacturer, reference incorrect orders, damaged goods, and delays. For example, see Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Richard M. Hoe and Company Records, 1824-1953, box 4, Incoming Letter File, February 6-10, 1858, no. 345; Box 15, Incoming Letter File, August 1-11 1877 (2), “Número 83,” from Pedro Martinez.

\textsuperscript{53} Account books from the national government printshop show that carpenters and other skilled workers routinely repaired presses or made printshop furniture. AGN, Gobernación, legajo 140, exp. 2.5. Local typefounders served the industry by producing letters missing from imported sorts of type. For example, in June 1824, Felix Telles founded a thousand j’s, m’s, p’s, r’s, c’s, a’s, and i’s in roman and italic styles, along with assorted decorative borders, spacers and rules, for the government’s printshop. He filled a similar order in August, and the founder Antonio Sardaneta filled orders in November and December. AGN, Imprenta del Gobierno, 1824, vols. 1-2. The government printshop contracted Isidro Ximenez for similar work in 1826. AGN, Gobernación, sin sección, caja 90, exp. 23, fols. 23-24. In 1845, Luis Abadiano paid the founder Mariano Ruiz for making a few punches, matrices, and several pounds of type likely to make numbering systems for items like raffle tickets. Sutro, Mexican MSS, SMMS HG, 1:2.


\textsuperscript{55} The issue reached the legislative floor several times. It was debated in March, 1844 in congress and the press, with a group of sixty-five printers challenging the head of the General Direction of National Industry, Lucas Alamán, on his subsidies for the Belén paper factory, owned by Juan Benfield. Ignacio Cumplido, “Cuestión sobre introducción de papel de imprenta a la república,” El Siglo Diez y Nueve, March 11, 1844; Lucas Alamán, “Representación dirigida al supremo gobierno por la dirección general de industria, sobre la cuestión de la introducción libre de derechos del papel extranjero para imprentas, que se discute en la cámara de diputados,” El Siglo Diez y Nueve, March 16, 1844; “Esposición que dirigen a la augusta representación nacional los impresores que la suscriben, para que se permita la libre introducción de papel sin cola á la republica,” El Siglo Diez y Nueve, March 19, 1844.
As Benedict Anderson pointed out in *Imagined Communities*, his oft-cited study of nationalism, printshops collected and repackaged news, commentary, and literature from abroad for local consumers. Mexico City’s printshops also connected local audiences to international developments with a continuous stream of individuals who passed through their doors. Printers from Spain, France, and the United States passed through their doors. Printers from Spain, France, and the United States

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immigrated to Mexico City to establish businesses, sometimes with great success. By the late nineteenth century, the Spanish liberal politician Emilio Castelar contributed regular columns to the venerable daily *El Monitor Republicano*, operated by the veteran radical-liberal printer Vicente García Torres, for Mexico City audiences. The Cuban exile and nationalist José Martí and chess master Andrés Clemente Vazquez passed through the city’s printshops where they worked as journalists, rubbing elbows with workers and Mexican writers. Martí—who would discuss the printing trades in essays written during his exile in the United States—even wrote a poem inspired by his experiences, *De noche en la imprenta* (At night in the printshop), which he published in Mexico City’s *Revista Universal*. Permeable spaces, printshops linked local networks with international materials, people, and ideas, serving as key hubs of knowledge production.

*From Texts to the Printshop Floor: Historical Accounts of Print in Mexico*

By focusing on the printshop as a specific site of knowledge production, I address a central lacuna in scholarly accounts of print in Mexico: how did the city’s landscape of print production change over time in relation to political, economic, and social shifts and how did print in turn propel politics and broader social and cultural change? Historians

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who examine the role of print both in and beyond Mexico’s borders have tended to answer the latter half of this question by drawing on theoretical formulations—in particular Jürgen Habermas’s analysis of the rise of the public sphere and Anderson’s notion of print capitalism—that link the expansion of print to the development of civil society or to a national print culture. My dissertation, in contrast, presents a materially grounded and socially contextualized analysis of print production and consumption, focusing on the printshop as a central—though permeable and hierarchically organized—space of Mexico City’s intellectual and political life.

To do so, I bring together several bodies of scholarship that have touched on specific aspects of print’s history. While scholars have long drawn on printed sources to chart Mexico’s intellectual currents and political development, studies in the fields of bibliography and history of the book have called for greater attention to the people, processes, and stylistic decisions that went into print’s production. Drawing on insights from labor history, my work brings these approaches together to broaden our understanding of Mexico City’s post-colonial world of knowledge production, examining the experiences of printers who, emboldened by the emergence of liberalism, claimed space and distinction in this contested field as the workers who gave ideas “form and life.”

By exploring the material alongside the social and political dimensions of print, this dissertation argues that struggles over print production—over the boundaries, rules,

and practices of knowledge production and politics—spilled out from the printshop floor and into the streets, where they shaped the contours of the capital city’s political culture.

Political and intellectual histories of Mexico draw heavily on sources like pamphlets and newspapers, quoting at length and even reproducing facsimiles of title pages to capture a sense of the debates and exchanges that accompanied the contested emergence and consolidation of liberalism across the nineteenth century. In influential classic works like Jesús Reyes Heroles’s three-volume *El liberalismo mexicano* (1957-61), Daniel Cosío Villegas’s nine-volume *Historia Moderna de México* (1955-74), and Charles Hale’s *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora* (1968), liberalism emerges as an overwhelmingly textual phenomenon—an internal conversation between journalists and elite authors. Recent scholarship has looked beyond the text to reveal how ordinary actors in Latin America engaged liberalism on the ground, as they developed popular understandings influenced by race, class, religion, and gender in specific local circumstances. These works have helped form a more nuanced vision of how liberal states emerged in the region by examining how popular and indigenous groups collaborated, negotiated with, and challenged top-down efforts to construct new political

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entities. Historians of Mexico in particular have explored how urban plebeians and rural indigenous groups contributed to the formation of a new political culture.\textsuperscript{62} My research adds to these recent approaches by examining print’s place not solely as a space of elite debate, but as a medium that emerged out of social and political negotiations centered in the urban environment.

The fact that print’s production and consumption clustered in Mexico’s urban centers is missing from Anderson’s influential work, in which he emphasized the role of print in constructing nationalism, a global phenomenon he identified as starting in the Americas. Anderson identifies what he terms “print capitalism”—the eighteenth century market-driven expansion of printed materials and readership—as one of the key factors that precipitated the formation of national identities out of colonial conditions in the Americas.\textsuperscript{63} Stepping back from the content of imprints, Anderson drew attention to the daily reading rituals engendered by the new medium of the newspaper, which encouraged individuals to develop a sense of simultaneous connection to other readers.\textsuperscript{64} The act of reading newspapers, he argued, also reorganized conceptions of space by repackaging international events within the local paper’s frame. These factors—emanating outwards


\textsuperscript{63} Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities}.

\textsuperscript{64} Trish Loughran tests the validity of this claim for the United States by examining publishers’ markets that might have sowed divisions, rather than unity. Trish Loughran, \textit{The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770-1870} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).
from printed items to readers—combined to produce horizontal ties that challenged old regime hierarchies and formed the basis for nationalism.

A closer examination of print production in Mexico, however, reveals that print functioned more as a marker of distinction amongst small communities of readers and producers than as a broadly democratizing medium that engendered national affinities. Rather than driving a robust “print capitalism,” Mexico’s printers navigated an economically fragile and politically treacherous system better described as “print clientelism,” which encompassed not only private publication initiatives, but also state-driven ones. Indeed, the boundaries between the two frequently blurred as the impoverished state relied on printers to produce official materials. Printers, for their part, accepted political patronage fully aware that they ran the risk of not getting paid by cash-strapped administrations. Church patronage also represented a major source of printer income, according to historian Edward Wright-Ríos, at least until liberals staged a successful and violent effort to divest the Catholic Church of its wealth at mid-century.

While Oz Frankel describes the rise of “print statism,” the state-driven “systemization of knowledge production” in which nineteenth-century North Atlantic governments constructed both the nation’s social body and the state itself through creation of widely disseminated printed social reports, Mexican governments on the edge of the North

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65 Anthropologist Claudio Lomnitz has suggested that nationalism is better understood to function in Mexico as a system that blends horizontal but more importantly vertical ties in the service of the nation, emerging out of much older Spanish political and religious formulations. Claudio Lomnitz, "Nationalism as a Practical System: Benedict Anderson’s Theory of Nationalism from the Vantage Point of Spanish America," in The Other Mirror: Grand Theory through the Lens of Latin America, ed. Miguel Angel Centeno and Fernando López-Alves (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 329-360.

Atlantic world lacked the resources to undertake large publishing efforts until much later.\(^{67}\)

Historians have rightly questioned Anderson’s overestimation of print’s reach throughout Latin America.\(^ {68}\) In contrast, they have been more receptive to ideas that highlight how expanding print production and journalism, consumed by a more limited bourgeois public, catalyzed political change and helped to construct modern civil society in Western Europe. For Habermas, print (and other forms of sociability) led to the formation of a public sphere—a neutral space of pluralistic debate between state and society in which bourgeois individuals “came together to form a public” outside of, and thus potentially critical of, government—in the transition from monarchical to democratic political systems in Western Europe.\(^ {69}\) Habermas’s approach to charting the

\(^{67}\) Oz Frankel, *States of Inquiry: Social Investigations and Print Culture in Nineteenth-century Britain and the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 13. Frankel’s broader work explores how this process also engendered “unforeseen encounters and dealings between governments and legislatures and their local interlocutors” rather than enacting a one-way power dynamic. 3.


transformation of old-regime societies into modern ones has been broadly influential, even as scholarship on contexts beyond the North Atlantic have offered critiques.\textsuperscript{70}

Examining the case of Mexico, historian François-Xavier Guerra, along with collaborator Annick Lempérière, took up and modified Habermas’s term from “public sphere” to the more concrete “public spaces.” Guerra and Lempérière proposed a model in which Enlightenment ideas from Europe arrived and took hold amongst elites, who constituted public opinion and gradually transformed society in a process through which modernity tugged on old regime practices.\textsuperscript{71} This process began in the late colonial era with advances in literacy, increases in printing, and the emergence of café culture, which laid the foundations for a spike in printing activity made possible after the 1808 crisis of the Spanish monarchy.\textsuperscript{72} By adopting the term “public spaces,” the authors refocused attention on actual sites of intellectual exchange—“the street and the plaza, Congress and the palace, the café and the printshop”—yet they rarely examined the printshop itself.\textsuperscript{73} Instead, Guerra favored quantitative analysis of imprint titles and circulation rates that

\textsuperscript{70} A widely cited study adopting Habermas’s argument for the United States is found in Michael Warner, \textit{The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-century America} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). Writing on Bombay’s nineteenth century Muslim newspaper economy, however, Nile Green sees “good reason to doubt that this newspaper economy was fully in tune with Habermas’s connection of the newspaper to the formation of a ‘rational’ public sphere.” Nile Green, \textit{Bombay Islam: the Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean, 1840-1915} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 94.


\textsuperscript{72} François-Xavier Guerra, \textit{Modernidad e independencias: ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas}, 2nd ed. (Mexico City: Editorial MAPFRE / Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993), 282.

\textsuperscript{73} Guerra and Lempérière, \textit{Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica}, 10.
purported to demonstrate a vibrant sharing of ideas through print media. This approach inspired a number of studies examining the constitution of modern public opinion through quantitative methods, especially focusing on the book trade with Europe, book ownership statistics mined from will inventories, and newspaper subscription rates. In these works, printed materials stand in for ideas that heralded the transition to modern society, constructed through shared reading practices. While quantitative methods can offer insights into what elite residents might have read at any given point in the past, Guerra’s modified notion of Habermas’s public sphere stops short of illuminating the complex negotiations through which printed materials came into being in the first place.

Inspired by Habermas’s theory, recent scholarship on Mexico’s political culture has taken a more qualitative approach, adapting the notion of the public sphere more

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loosely as “a guide for an inclusive analysis of processes that encompassed social, economic, and cultural phenomena,” rather than a prototype for exploring the transition from old regime to modern societies.76 Pablo Piccato’s study of the late nineteenth century press thus explores the interplay between journalists’ activities; their self-construction as crusaders who, lacking economic power, mobilized discourses of honor to defend ideas in print (and sometimes deadly duels); and the publics they sought to sway. Adding new complexity to our understanding of journalists’ relationships to the liberal state that emerged in the last quarter of the nineteenth century under the thirty-year administration of Porfirio Díaz, Piccato traced government attempts to tame public opinion by modifying press laws and de-fusing honor.

Piccato, like Elba Chávez Lomelí who charts a century of press legislation in a complementary study, pays attention to the political motivations guiding lawmakers who hoped to control the press.77 Yet these studies perhaps overemphasize the importance of legal mechanisms, especially given the broad array of techniques used by officials to negotiate with the press, which the studies reference but do not explore in detail. More critically, they overlook the centrality of printshops and their proprietors in facilitating journalistic brinksmanship by paying salaries, printing political positions, and navigating

government efforts to rein in print. By exploring how regulation played out in these spaces, my research uncovers a world of political exchange in which printers’ activities—which entangled politics and production—routinely frustrated and in the process shaped efforts to define and police freedom of the press.

While works on journalists and press laws illuminated specific shifts in Mexico City’s press relations with the government and offered new insights into the rules shaping Mexico’s political culture, bibliographical studies and histories of the book have contributed necessary fine-grained analyses of the mechanics of print production and established the identities and affiliations of its central actors. Early studies of printing history in Mexico displayed clear biases against the technological developments that increased printing output over the course of the nineteenth century. They also focused on what they considered to be serious intellectual publications rather than political materials or “novels and frivolous works” that threatened to deflate print’s lofty status. 78 The Chilean bibliographer José Toribio Medina, who compiled the eight-volume enumerative bibliography La imprenta en México between 1907 and 1912, viewed the city’s colonial imprints as evidence of a Hispanic intellectual tradition established in cities across the Spanish Americas. 79 Conceived as a specialized project for fellow connoisseurs and

79 Thus, his works focused on individual cities including Puebla, Guadalajara, Veracruz, Lima, Havana, Cartagena, Manila, and Guatemala. Medina’s philosophy echoes the proposals set forward in Uruguayan author José Enrique Rodó’s 1900 essay Ariel, which established Latin America’s spiritual superiority—emerging from a shared Hispanic heritage—to the United States’ crude materialism.
intellectuals, Medina printed his study on an in-house vanity press in an edition of 250 copies.

While Medina’s work approached printed items as the material evidence of civilization and romanticized its makers as craftsmen of a lost pre-industrial age, contemporary interpretive bibliographical studies, in particular by Marina Garone Gravier, have placed Mexico’s printing trades and their products in historical context. These studies have identified stylistic and material connections between Mexico and Europe, explored how these connections were reconfigured in the late eighteenth century and after the collapse of the Spanish empire, and shed new light on local production practices. By historicizing print production, new bibliographical studies have moved beyond the elitist attitudes underpinning early twentieth-century efforts to canvas Mexico’s printing traditions. Yet while close analysis of the formal and material properties of imprints has yielded key insights into how the printing trades functioned, bibliographical studies have been less successful at linking the specifics of print production to the broader social, economic, cultural, and political phenomena explored by historians and literary scholars.

This challenge was taken up by recent scholarship that, using methods from the approach known as “history of the book,” has grappled with the relationship of print

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materials to Mexico’s wider (and predominantly illiterate) population. Far from being the purview of elites—as they were assumed to be in works like Medina’s—these scholars argued that printed works in fact circulated among social groups and could be analyzed as texts with a series of possible interpretations that depended on social position. Taking up cultural historian of Early Modern France Roger Chartier’s observation that encounters with texts represented “a process much more broadly defined than simply the silent reading of an individual in isolation,” these authors challenged hard barriers between literate and oral cultures. Rather, they sought to uncover “how people appropriated certain books and certain practices” across social divisions.

This move opened a new interpretive avenue for printed sources, offering a critique of historiography that narrowly linked elite consumers of print and the Enlightenment. Following this approach, historians have produced numerous studies on the editorial output and ideological valences of various nineteenth-century printshops in Mexico, assigning them broad importance to a national culture that cut across social groups and was defined through print. For Laura Suárez de la Torre, study of publishing

81 Laura Suárez de la Torre and Miguel Angel Castro, eds., Empresa y cultura en tinta y papel: 1800-1860 (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora / Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2001); Laura Suárez de la Torre, ed. Constructores de un cambio cultural: impresores-editores y libreros en la ciudad de México, 1830-1855 (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr José María Luis Mora, 2003); Miguel Angel Castro, ed. Tipos y caracteres: la prensa mexicana, 1822-1855 (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2001); Adriana Pineda Soto and Celia del Palacio, eds., La prensa decimonónica en México: objeto y sujeto de la historia (Guadalajara; Morelia: Universidad de Guadalajara / Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, 2003).


offered the chance to “confront a history different from the one characterized solely by the convulsed political environment of the time.”\textsuperscript{84} De-centering political history, a series of edited volumes have highlighted the role of printer-publishers in the construction of Mexico’s cultural and intellectual life, and identified a constellation of important individuals, sketching out their biographical data, career trajectory, and major publishing successes across the first half of the nineteenth century. While these works portray a lively if economically tenuous world of cultural production and exchange, their de-emphasis of political and social factors has obfuscated how such circumstances structured printers’ activities and shaped their publishing programs.\textsuperscript{85}

My approach builds on book historians’ work by reinjecting politics into a narrative that follows some of the most salient characters in Mexico City’s world of print as they navigated their relationship with government and an emerging legal order. At the same time, it explores the social and laboring dimensions of this process, challenging historiographical trends that separate the efforts of journalists and writers from those of the printers, typesetters and press operators assumed to mindlessly convert others’ words into material form through manual and managerial labor. The effect of these separations, I argue, has been to assign immutable identities upon what was, historically, a remarkably fluid and contested space of knowledge production.

\textsuperscript{84} Suárez de la Torre and Castro, Empresa y cultura, 7.
\textsuperscript{85} One exception can be found in Laura Suárez de la Torre, ed. Tras las huellas de Eugenio Sue: Lectura, circulación y apropiación de Los misterios de París. Siglo XIX (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2015).
Recent studies emerging out of labor history have dug deeper into the social dynamics of nineteenth-century print production and its relation to broader class structures. In his examination of the socialist ideas articulated by “worker intellectuals” active in the 1870s and 1880s, historian Carlos Illades identified a group of artisans (including printers like the socialist Juan Mata de Rivera) as “organic intellectuals … [who] articulated worker’s discourse in two directions, being simultaneously vehicles and intermediaries of interlocution amongst their class and with the state,” adopting the ideas of Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci. Yet Robert Buffington’s study of the early twentieth century penny press argues that worker-journalists were less interested in upending class structures than shaping worker subjectivities. Focused on offering a “sentimental education” aimed at Mexico City’s working men, these writers aimed “to transform workers’ sense of themselves and their relationship to the nation” via a subtle, empathic project of social reform put forward in satirical and lyrical prose and poetry.

While the alternative educational project of the penny press first appears to be less than radical, Buffington suggests that working class editors’ “nonrevolutionary literary aspirations” might in fact constitute a deeper transformative project because workers

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87 Carlos Illades, Las otras ideas: estudio sobre el primer socialismo en México, 1850-1935 (Mexico City: Ediciones Era / Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Cuajimalpa, 2008), 205. Quoted in Buffington, A Sentimental Education, 27. “estos intelectuales orgánicos y modernos articularon en dos direcciones el discurso trabajador, siendo a la vez vehículos e intermediarios de la interlocución dentro de su clase y hacia el Estado.”

88 A Sentimental Education, 24.
themselves had assumed the task of redefining the fundamental categories of masculinity and citizenship.\textsuperscript{89} Buffington’s argument draws on the work of theorist Jacques Rancière who, in \textit{The Nights of Labor: The Workers’ Dream in Nineteenth-century France}, examines the efforts of French worker-intellectuals who preferred to take up the writer’s pen as poets of the universal, rather than engage revolutionary politics based on the celebration of work as the source of life. “It is the dream of moving to the other side of the canvas,” he argues, that represents an even more revolutionary aspiration: to dissolve the lines between manual and intellectual activities imposed upon workers.\textsuperscript{90} Rancière encourages scholars not to limit their appraisals to artisans’ experiences as workers, but to approach them as “also a particular category of intellectuals, more intellectual, in a sense, than we are, for their intellectuality is a victory over their condition.”\textsuperscript{91}

This dissertation takes up Rancière’s charge to explore the social positionings and intellectual aspirations of printers in all their ambivalences. In nineteenth-century Mexico City, printers offered a range of analyses on their place in relation to intellectuals and within broader society, and sometimes mustered workplace resources to advance intellectual proposals on the job. Political expediency might lead printers to characterize themselves as witless machines with no conception of their potentially revolutionary

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 28.
relationship to words. Yet as workers who manually elaborated the stuff of intellectual life, they were deeply invested in the symbolic power of print as a technology of enlightenment—an idea upon which they might lay claims for status and glory, and to construct positive notions of worker masculinity based on talent and skill rather than inherited privileges or formal education.

Sources and Methods

Printed texts—including newspapers, broadsides, pamphlets, and legal decrees—often offer only partial, and sometimes less-than transparent information about their own making. Thus, the dissertation considers not only the contents of printed texts, but their conditions of production and place in a broader world of cultural consumption rooted in the urban environment, bringing methodological approaches used by social, cultural, and labor historians to bear on the history of knowledge production and politics.

In order to contextualize printed materials, I rely on a range of archival sources and methods. Because historians of print in Mexico have tended to focus on individual actors or particular printed items rather than the broader question of print’s role in Mexican politics and society, they have often approached archival sources only selectively. The strength of this dissertation lies in its incorporation of archival materials that offer new insight into the inner workings and networks of print production. Using archival materials along with printed sources, I map the printing industry as it transformed from tightly knit trade to intensely polemical panoply to an increasingly widespread yet specialized industry with divergent business and political priorities and clearer divisions of labor.
My dissertation draws on manuscript sources collected from six archives and libraries around Mexico City and five U.S. libraries. It uses notarial records such as contracts of press sales and inventories to examine the business practices of printers. While such records are by no means comprehensive, they capture a sense of the widely divergent scale at which printers historically operated, and the financial difficulties they frequently faced in acquiring expensive machinery. Official documents produced by government ministry officials also attest to the importance of government contracts for Mexico City printers. Using contracts and official correspondence, my dissertation traces the business relationships between local printers and government over a forty-year period, systematically establishing an important facet of local print production.

Alongside their business activities, printers also had regular dealings with the national government, often as the recipients of official efforts to regulate or punish them. Thus, correspondence scattered in the National Archives in the papers of the Ministry of Internal and External Affairs (Relaciones Interiores y Exteriores), which later became the Ministry of Gobernación, contains a trove of information on local printers’ activities in politics and official efforts to rein them in. Cases regarding charges of sedition, initiated by the executive, frequently targeted printers and reveal more about the routine nature of the contested legality of freedom of the press and how it unfolded on the ground. Legal case files, housed in the cursorily processed files of the Tribunal Superior Judicial del Distrito Federal, show that printers had frequent run-ins with the law, often caught in the middle of disputes over accusations of libel or defamation. These documents offered
further evidence of printers’ status as critical intermediaries in the production of knowledge. In addition to situating print production within business and political networks, my dissertation examines printers’ place in Mexico City’s social landscape. To do so, I rely on labor records from the Government Printshop, trade manuals, letters, unpublished and published memoirs, newspaper articles, and fictional and artistic portrayals in novels and caricatures. Produced and consulted by both intellectuals and printers, these characterizations reveal that the field of knowledge production was contested as actors struggled to assert dominance in a field structured by economics and status-seeking. Printers worked on the boundaries between manual and intellectual labor, often mustering superior economic resources yet earning less recognition and respect than the writers they employed, stigmatized by the stain of ink under the fingernails. If manual labor continued to be viewed as a debasing activity, printers themselves used the language of liberalism—deployed with a trade-specific twist that privileged the printed word—to reimagine a different social order. They, like nineteenth-century journalists, aspired to earn the moniker of hombre de talento, a man celebrated not for his means, but for his natural abilities. By interpreting representations of printshop activity against each other and the realities of print production, my dissertation offers insights into the social struggles that

93 A similar argument regarding printers of African descent among Puerto Rican liberals is offered in Hoffnung-Garskof, "To Abolish the Law of Castes," 312-342.
accompanied the transformation of print production, and the nature of printers’ particular engagement with and expression of liberalism.\textsuperscript{94}

Finally, I examine—through close attention to key episodes—the range of printed genres that emerged from printshops. As scholars of nineteenth-century Mexico have explored, newspapers represented only one product of the printing trades’ prodigious output.\textsuperscript{95} I interpret printed items, particularly those that engaged politics, as embedded in their local historical contexts, in relation to a broader ensemble of printed materials that emerged in real time from urban printshops. Printed materials frequently formed a conversation—developing into a critical mass around a position or issue—that consumers might encounter in the city streets or from the hand of the author, gather together in a personal archive, or bind into a series of pamphlets.\textsuperscript{96} By understanding how such key episodes unfolded, I examine how historical actors with diverse perspectives engaged and debated politics through print. While readers may have appropriated texts to suit their own priorities, the nature of print polemics suggests audiences were frequently encouraged to consume printed items as elements in ongoing political struggles unfolding on the ground.

\textsuperscript{94} On understanding broader political culture through study of specific contexts, see Guardino, \textit{The Time of Liberty: Popular Political Culture in Oaxaca, 1750-1850}, 12.
\textsuperscript{95} On propaganda in the form of broadsides and pasquines, see Hugh M. Hamill, "Royalist Propaganda and "La Porción Humilde del Pueblo" during Mexican Independence," \textit{The Americas} 36, no. 4 (1980): 423-444. On popular print, especially calendars, see Wright-Rios, \textit{Searching for Madre Matiana}.
\textsuperscript{96} Volumes at the Sutro Library are bound together of pamphlets organized in temporal and thematic clusters. The collecting practices of Carlos María de Bustamante and José María Lafragua are surviving examples of how nineteenth-century elites assembled personal archives of political materials.
In addition to considering printed texts as items that advanced political debates, my dissertation attends to the formal qualities of printed materials, an approach that has been generally overlooked by historians who mine printed texts for their content. Largely determined by printers who relied on custom or looked abroad for inspiration as they developed new local genre conventions, typographic and design choices offer important clues about how audiences might have viewed particular imprints and their contents. By examining the material and visual qualities of printed materials using methods borrowed from bibliography and visual studies, my dissertation explores how stylistic convention and design decisions played a role in broader contests over authority. Mexico’s print corpus multiplied over the course of the nineteenth century, but key genres endured and evolved from the colonial era, particularly the forms of official decrees and religious ephemera. Other forms emerged later, as printers experimented with new print technologies developed abroad. The typographic and material quality of imprints—including the condition of printing type, paper size and quality, and use and type of illustrations—all contributed to how an item might be evaluated or used by audiences, and could even play important roles in more acute political struggles. Trained as a letterpress printer, I use my own knowledge of craft and design to identify how printers adapted, invented, and deployed distinct print genres, styles, and conventions to sway diverse and often fractious audiences.

**Dissertation Structure**

This dissertation offers a new narrative of the emergence of liberalism in Mexico by tracing Mexico’s printing trades and their central actors from the late colonial era
through the late nineteenth century. On the eve of independence, a series of broadsides and journal articles—released immediately after Spain had approved freedom of the press legislation in 1820—openly criticized Mexico City printers for wielding their economic power to stifle free expression. In the late colonial era, printers had facilitated print production by collaborating closely with viceregal authorities, Inquisition censors, and elite (mainly religiously affiliated) authors. A number of printers had participated actively in the late eighteenth century Enlightenment reform projects carried out under the Bourbons, adopting new design sensibilities and typographical styles and facilitating the sanctioned release of new secular genres like the gazette. Yet the outbreak of popular rural insurgencies in 1810 destabilized attitudes towards print, as insurgents commandeered their own presses to challenge official authority from the rural hinterlands.

The first chapter, after taking stock of Mexico City’s colonial printing trades before and during the upheaval of insurgency, examines how printers, authors, and officials navigated a new world after freedom of the press laws abolished prior censorship of print production. Deep uncertainty over how the newly sanctioned concept of “libertad de imprenta” would function in practice intersected with the economic reality that print production concentrated in a meager handful of urban printshops with strong ties to the colonial regime. While public writers like José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi tried to define this emerging landscape and push back against printers’ power as gatekeepers of knowledge production, powerful printers like Alejandro Valdés confronted uncertainty over where their loyalties should lie in relation to the viceregal
government. When a prominent military official self-identified as “El Liberal” released a broadside accusing Mexico’s “slavish writers” of “prostituting your pens in clumsy adulation” to the Viceroy Apodaca in 1820, it provoked outrage from officials who struggled to apply new press laws to prevent the broadside from circulating. The full episode revealed that the enactment of freedom of the press emerged in negotiations between printers, authors, opportunistic city residents, concerned religious authorities, and officials, who navigated a climate of extreme uncertainty over the rules and norms governing print production.

Uncertainty over print production shaped the emerging political landscape after Mexico’s 1821 independence and remained unresolved as political factions emerged in the new republic, explored in chapter two. After the government’s aspiration of achieving print sovereignty by establishing a Government Printshop foundered for lack of funds, the state contracted with Mexico City printers to fulfill official printing needs. Printers, for their part, juggled patronage relationships, political commitments, and profit-seeking in the weak post-colonial economy. Playing an important role in political contests, they also suffered relentless scrutiny from officials and developed sophisticated tactics to mitigate attempts to regulate their activities or mete out punishment. Chapter two examines these dynamics by exploring the production, controversy, and ensuing legal proceedings against the creators of an 1840 pro-monarchist pamphlet. Written by a senator who commentators suggested enjoyed the financial backing of Europeans intent on overthrowing the new republic, the pamphlet was printed by the up-and-coming liberal printer Ignacio Cumplido, who collaborated behind the scenes with other actors to
issue the controversial text. By examining the pamphlet’s production and subsequent political fallout, the chapter explores how printers worked with key legal categories like “responsibility” for imprints and constructed new public personae based on upholding the principles of the law. Defining the role of the printer as akin to that of a machine in order to contest punishment, printers simultaneously claimed importance as public figures with their own agendas.

Printers’ agendas took center stage as political divisions between liberals and conservatives hardened by the middle of the nineteenth century. The third chapter traces how a powerful trio fueled political polarization, which intensified after the U.S. invasion of Mexico, through newspaper polemics and editorial endeavors. When radical liberal printer Vicente García Torres issued a translation of an anti-Catholic French novel, the international bestseller *Mysteries of the Inquisition*, he deliberately provoked church officials, who in 1850 retained censorship power over printed items bearing on religion. The novel’s text—printed in García Torres’s newspaper in serial after he stole the edition from another liberal printer—narrated a tale of inquisitorial intrigue, with priests who pursued earthly pleasures by means of coercion, torture, and deception. Adding insult to injury, a second printed book featured graphic illustrations depicting victims on the rack and priests propositioning innocent virgins. By publishing the novel and sustaining a polemic about it for many months, liberals provoked the Archbishopric of Mexico City into banning the novel and soliciting state support in enforcing the ban. This engineered conflict forced government and religious officials to take stock of the current rules
governing print production, and further contributed to the growing ideological stalemate that would soon erupt into violent civil war.

By 1867, liberals claimed victory over conservative forces, issuing a printed booklet, *Los traidores pintados por sí mismos*, which promised to reproduce “the secret book of Maximilian, containing his impressions of his servants.”97 The small bound volume, examined in chapter four, pulled back the curtain on the administration of the Hapsburg monarch who, backed by French troops, had invaded in 1864 and crowned himself emperor of Mexico. While printers had navigated dramatic swings in political power since the late 1840s, their relationship with government was reshaped during Maximilian’s rule after the emperor established an Imperial Printshop that reduced the need to rely on local contractors. Previous national governments had handed out printing contracts along party lines throughout the tumultuous decades surrounding *La Reforma*, a period of conflict in which liberals and conservatives clashed over the implementation of sweeping liberal reforms. Yet when liberal forces defeated and executed Maximilian in 1867, they re-purposed his Imperial Printshop as the National Printshop, likely using the same presses to issue *Los traidores*, which reproduced humiliating crib notes about the emperor’s collaborators. Chapter four examines the establishment of the government printshop, which effectively realigned the patronage relationships and urban networks between local printers and political elites that had defined the industry for the previous forty years. The government’s takeover of its communications apparatus represented a

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97 The title translates literally as “Traitors painted by themselves,” or, more figuratively, “Traitors in their own words.” “Libro secreto de Maximiliano, en que aparece la idea que tenía de sus servidores.”
symbolic and practical step towards state consolidation—an early forerunner of the growth of a more powerful national government.

Liberal victory opened new avenues for Mexico City printers, who participated in wide ranging intellectual discussions about how politics and society should be organized during the 1870s. Chapter five examines how printers—particularly typesetters—analyzed and navigated their unique position as the manual elaborators of printed texts. While elites might view the typesetter as “nothing more than the worker who transforms a work of intelligence into material labor,” typesetters argued that they instead had to “transform material work into works of intelligence.” These claims for greater recognition in the field of knowledge production celebrated liberalism and the possibilities it had opened for social ascent, and formulated a positive, if exclusive, notion of worker masculinity based on resourcefulness and natural talent, pushing back against denigrating elite stereotypes. Printed demands for inclusion were even made on the job, as a rare 1877 type specimen produced by workers in the government printshop reveals. Composed as a sweeping, if fragmentary narrative that celebrated Mexico’s liberal victory, the type specimen claimed full membership for printers in the world of knowledge production, based on their unique relationship to print.

By examining how printers articulated their own positions along the border of manual and intellectual labors, my dissertation resists historians’ tendency to adopt the intellectual’s perspective towards print, which imagines printed materials as one-way

98 El Cajista,” El Socialista, June 13, 1875. “transformar el trabajo material en trabajo de inteligencia.”
vectors of diffusion, dissemination, or coercion. Starting from the shop floor, it shows how printed items functioned as elements in more complex processes that unfolded simultaneously on the ground and in the high-stakes terrain of national politics. Printers’ own self-fashioning as the workers who made ideas concrete referenced and challenged the divide separating the shop floor from the elevated world of politics and intellectual exchange. Thus, struggles over print production refracted the pressing social contests that accompanied liberal state formation.
Chapter 1. Negotiating Freedom: Mexico City Printers in the Age of Independence

In June of 1822, a simple, crudely printed anonymous broadsheet, entitled *La libertad de imprenta todo lo cuenta*, (roughly, Freedom of the Press sums it all up) emerged from the printshop of José María Betancourt, one of a handful of new shops that had sprung up in Mexico City in the months after freedom of the press had been declared in 1820.1 Addressed to the printer Alejandro Valdés, the broadsheet’s anonymous author, a humble Observadora (Observer) complained that Valdés had been abusing his role as the Impresor de Cámara (official printer) to the new imperial government of Agustín Iturbide. In mock affectionate language that broke through the layers of Valdés’s official status, the text chided the printer for his typesetting, accusing him of printing a scarce ten lines of type—in the size reserved for lectern reading—across a full sheet of paper.2 This mismatched design, which left enough marginal space around the printed text to write out an entire announcement, had been arranged purposefully so that the broadside would come out costing an even one real. Adding insult to injury, the news contained in the allegedly urgent broadside was four days old. The Observadora and her husband had purchased the broadside because “we are very curious”—he because he “is a man of

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2 Playing with the notion of authority, the broadside commenced with standard formal address but immediately broke down the language of exchange into intimate terms aimed at creating a popular voice. “Muy señor mio y muy señor D. Impresor de Cámara: Tatita, ya nos ha pegado V. Muchas…” Observadora, *La libertad de imprenta todo lo cuenta*, 1.
letters, and I because I would like to know what happens in other peoples’ houses.”

Valdés’s abusive business practices, however, had left the humble couple broke.

“Tomorrow we’ll breakfast with water,” lamented the Observadora.

The 1822 broadside used a fictionalized story of a real-world print deception—complete with coarse humor that parodied its modest protagonists’ popular origins—to launch a serious critique against one of Mexico’s most prominent printers. Such a critique, materialized in the worn-down and mismatched type likely acquired second-hand by an upstart printshop, would have been unthinkable just a few years earlier. For most of the colonial era, print was tightly regulated by the institutions of the Inquisition and the office of the Viceroy. Satirical jabs circulated from time to time, but almost always in manuscript form: printers operated within and upheld a framework of regulation organized around the twin mechanisms of censorship and privileges. The broadside thus spoke to a series of significant changes shaping not only the business, but also the meanings and uses of print and the place of printers in Mexico City.

The new ability to publish critical imprints emerged directly out of tumultuous political events unfolding in Mexico City, the viceroyalty of New Spain, and the broader Spanish empire over several decades. Mexico had achieved independence in 1821. In spite of the monarchical crisis unfolding in Spain due to the Napoleonic invasion of the

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3 Ibid. “somos demasiado curiosos;” “es hombre de letras, y yo porque quisiera saber hasta lo que pasa en las casas agenas”

4 On the satirical *pasquines* that circulated as hand-written artifacts, see Gabriel Torres Puga, *Opinión pública y censura en Nueva España: indicios de un silencio imposible (1767-1794)* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2010), 323-326.
peninsula (1808-1814), New Spain’s viceregal governments—located in Mexico City—managed to fend off a local autonomist coup (1808), survive dwindling finances, flood, and severe epidemics (1813), and most critically beat back organized popular rebellions that had wreaked havoc around the countryside since their outbreak in 1810. As a result of Napoleon’s invasion, Spanish liberals had managed to draft a constitution at Cádiz, which was reluctantly implemented in New Spain, then revoked with the restoration of Ferdinand VII to the throne in 1814, and readopted in 1820, along with provisions guaranteeing freedom of the press.

When the critical broadsheet appeared in June of 1822, it emerged onto a changed and rapidly changing political landscape. Although the rural insurgency’s military threat had been curtailed under the viceroy Félix María Calleja (1813-16) and reconciliation pursued by his successor Juan Ruiz de Apodaca (1816-21), the royalist general Agustín de Iturbide surprised crown officials by defecting—united with holdout insurgent leaders under the Plan de Iguala—in 1821, ushering in Mexico’s independence. While leaders convoked a constitutional congress in 1821, by 1822, Iturbide had declared himself emperor. The Constitution drafted in Cádiz remained in effect, however, carrying with it the right to freedom of the press. The printer Alejandro Valdés, meanwhile, had taken up

the title of “Impresor de Cámara,” a moniker that his father, the printer Manuel Antonio Valdés, had once held under the viceregal regime.\textsuperscript{6}

Emerging precisely at this moment of political uncertainty, La Observadora’s mocking broadsheet of Valdés’s official role of “Impresor de Cámara” shattered the consensus on the printer’s long-enjoyed privileges, which he had managed to retain in spite of the collapse of the viceregal regime. Iturbide’s government fell within a year, replaced by a republic. Valdés continued to operate in Mexico City, but only by navigating the emerging, unfamiliar landscape of republican printing. This chapter explores how print production in Mexico City changed between the final decades of the colonial era and the first years after the founding of the republic. It begins by describing the colonial printing trades as they evolved under the Bourbon reforms initiated in the second half of the eighteenth century, considering how Mexico City printers engaged reform as a material and formal process, and exploring printers’ position as mediators who facilitated the regulatory process linking the viceroy, inquisition officials, and authors. It then examines how the outbreak of rural insurgencies powerfully reshaped longstanding assumptions about the relationship between print and authority. These assumptions—which rested on the close connection between Mexico City printers and government and religious officials—were further shaken by the arrival of freedom of the press legislation as dictated in the liberal constitution adopted twice during the first

\textsuperscript{6} This moniker appears on a printed pamphlet, Decreto de las cortes generales y extraordinarias del reyno, sobre arreglo de tribunales y sus atribuciones,  (Mexico City: Por D. Manuel Antonio Valdés, Impresor de Cámara de S.M., 1813). accessed in AGN, Indiferente Vireinal, Impresos Oficiales, caja 1198, exp. 005.
decades of the nineteenth century. With clear connections muddied, printers, authors, and officials struggled to define new norms to govern print production.

Rather than a linear process in which subjects gained an indisputable right to freedom of the press, press freedom emerged in viceregal Mexico as a series of local struggles over the power and responsibilities of printers, and the proper uses of print in a time of great political uncertainty. Disputes between top printers and emerging public figures like writer José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi revealed would-be authors’ frustrations with the limits imposed by Mexico City printers in spite of freedom of the press, and showed how both writers and printers immediately took up liberal language—developing competing contextual definitions of rights and responsibilities—to argue their positions. The publication of a seditious pamphlet by an elite member of the royalist military, furthermore, challenged officials’ ability to manage the spread of information, and tested printers’ loyalties during a moment when the foundations of authority were shifting under their feet. These episodes reveal that abstract notions of freedom of the press played out in materially grounded (if sometimes discursively-waged) struggles over the production and dissemination of print, in which printers came to play a prominent role as gatekeepers of political and intellectual life.

Printers at the Nexus of Reform in Bourbon Mexico City

The challenge to Valdés staged through the mocking broadside emblematized a notable shift in publicly expressed attitudes towards printers, figures who had maintained close connections with viceregal power since the introduction of the printing press in
Over the course of the colonial era, Mexico City printers produced an estimated total of over 8,000 imprints. In the sixteenth century, urban printers—many of whom were European-born craftsmen—directed much of their labor towards producing imprints intended for use in Catholic evangelization efforts. A local family printing dynasty—the Calderón family, which exercised a “near-monopoly on printing in New Spain”—developed over the seventeenth century, thanks to the royal privilege for printing *cartillas*, simple, often bi- or multilingual instructional texts used both to educate lay people and as introductory guides for priests learning indigenous languages. By the eighteenth century, printing had evolved to become “an exclusive apparatus for Spanish-creole culture” and New Spain’s robust intellectual communities. Clergy members figured prominently in these communities, representing 72% of the pool of just 1,700

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8 This count includes books and also many smaller works. Rivas Mata also references a much larger estimate of 20,000, but offers a century-by-century breakdown that adds up to closer to 8,000. Emma Rivas Mata, "Impresores y mercaderes de libros en la ciudad de México, siglo XVII," in Del autor al lector: libros y librerías en la historia, ed. Carmen Castañeda García (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2002), 75-76.  
10 The *cartilla* monopoly moved from Spain to New Spain in the early seventeenth century. The Calderón family also produced edicts for the Inquisition. Kenneth C. Ward, ""Mexico, Where They Coin Money and Print Books": the Calderón Dynasty and the Mexican Book Trade, 1630-1730" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2013), 57, 202.  
11 As a result, both Latin works and indigenous language works decreased significantly. Chocano Mena, "Colonial Printing and Metropolitan Books: Printed Texts and the Shaping of Scholarly Culture in New Spain, 1539-1700," 73, 76.
individuals who published works in Mexico City during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{12}

Beginning in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, printers participated in the expansion of local literary and scientific production that accompanied the circulation of Enlightenment ideas in New Spain. Although scholars of eighteenth century intellectual and scientific culture have yet to consider what role printers played in this process, preliminary research suggests that printers acted as critical facilitators, especially in bringing a spirit of reform to Mexico City’s printing trades.\textsuperscript{13} The expansion of Enlightenment ideas in Spain’s colonies dovetailed with a series of reform efforts implemented under the Bourbon monarchy, aimed at consolidating royal power and modernizing the empire’s economic infrastructure.\textsuperscript{14} During this time, the profiles and orientation of Mexico City printers shifted. Newcomers from Spain, likely without significant craft experience but in possession of capital, established printing businesses

\textsuperscript{12} Moreno Gamboa, "La imprenta y los autores novohispanos," 90, 99.
\textsuperscript{13} Recent dissertations on printing in eighteenth century Mexico City have focused on the business practices and output of printers more than their relationship to authors or the changing viceregal regime. Ana Cecilia Montiel Ontiveros, En la esquina de Tacuba y Santo Domingo: La imprenta de María Fernández de Jáurequi, testigo y protagonista de la cultura impresa 1801-1817 (Mexico City: Coalición de Libreros / Sísifo Ediciones, 2015); Ward, ""Mexico, Where They Coin Money and Print Books"."

that challenged the dominance of the long-standing Calderón creole printing dynasty.\footnote{On the development of competition in the early eighteenth century, see Ward, ""Mexico, Where They Coin Money and Print Books"", Chapter 6.}

Institutions, too, began founding printshops as part of their intellectual programs. Thus, Jesuits at the Colegio de San Ildefonso and the rector of the Real y Pontificia Universidad de México Juan José de Egüiara y Eguren established printshops by midcentury to generate income and produce learned works.\footnote{While Egüiara y Eguren’s Imprenta de la Biblioteca Mexicana produced numerous scholarly volumes, the printshop run by the Jesuits acted—perhaps surprisingly—more as a source of revenue. On the Biblioteca Mexicana, see Medina, \textit{La imprenta en México}, CLXXIII. On the Colegio de San Ildefonso’s press, see Martha Ellen Whittaker, "Jesuit Printing in Bourbon Mexico City: The Press of the Colegio de San Ildefonso, 1748-1767" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1998).}

The reformist agenda carried out under the Bourbons involved a concerted effort to modernize the material and formal aspects of production. In Spain, the crown had invested seriously in developing a typographic industry that could produce printed works on par with other European powers. Under Fernando VI, it enacted protectionist tariffs on imported Spanish-language books with the aim of encouraging book production in Spain.\footnote{Albert Corbeto, "Tipografía y patrocinio real. La intervención del gobierno en la importación de tipos de imprenta en España," in \textit{Imprenta real: fuentes de la tipografía española}, ed. José María Ribagorda (Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación / AECID, 2009), 38.}

Under Charles III, the crown undertook a series of typographical projects focused on turning Madrid into an up-to-date center of print production. It acquired matrices—the molds used to cast individual letters of type—from France, and subsidized local craftsmen to develop their own. To make a matrix, engravers first carved a positive letterform onto the end of a steel rod, or punch, which would then be hammered into a softer metal to create the negative matrix into which hot lead would be poured to cast...
type. Noted punch cutters like Eudald Pradell, Jerónimo Antonio Gil, and Antonio
Espinosa de los Monteros received financial support to develop matrices, which were
used to produce type for the newly-established Royal Printshop, the Imprenta Real, set up
within the Royal Library in 1761. The crown further centralized print production by
recouping the various privileges that had been distributed over the years to printers who
produced royal materials.\textsuperscript{18}

Mexico City printers engaged the reform process on an ad hoc basis by
purchasing and importing types and matrices produced by the Imprenta Real.\textsuperscript{19}
Furthermore, one of the chief participants in the peninsular printing reform efforts,
Jerónimo Antonio Gil, himself arrived in Mexico City. Gil, trained as an engraver, had
produced thousands of punches while working under the auspices of the Royal Library in
Madrid: his type designs were among those imported to New Spain. After being granted
the post of head engraver of the Mexico City Mint, Gil traveled to Mexico City in 1778,
and soon after founded a school of engraving which would become the colony’s first fine
arts academy, the Academy of San Carlos.\textsuperscript{20} “Influenced by the utilitarian dimensions of

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 30, 37-42.
\textsuperscript{19} Four printers imported types from the Imprenta Real in the second half of the eighteenth century.
Mexican printers also experimented with designing type locally, but details about this process remain
scarce, with only one imprint identified as featuring Mexican-cut types. Marina Garone Gravier, "La
influencia de la Imprenta Real en América: el caso de México," ibid., 94-96. pp. 94-6. On Felipe Zúñiga y
Ontiveros’s purchase of matrices designed by Jerónimo Antonio Gil, see Medina, La imprenta en México,
\textsuperscript{20} Corbeto, "Tipografía y patrocinio real," 40. On the internal conflicts between Gil and directors of the
Academy in the early years after its founding, see Susan Deans-Smith, “A Natural and Voluntary
Dependence’: The Royal Academy of San Carlos and the Cultural Politics of Art Education in Mexico City,
engraving’s importance on the resistant directors of San Carlos (also Spaniards more recently arrived to
teach in the academy), who viewed engraving as an inferior art.
Enlightenment thought,” the crown approved Gil’s proposal, viewing the arts academy as an appropriate educational institution that could help transform New Spain’s “economic and social malaise.” Although Gil petitioned the viceroy in 1784 to establish a printshop modeled after the Imprenta Real, his request was unsuccessful, perhaps because the viceroy favored local printers.

Gil’s arrival in Mexico coincided with the movement among some Mexico City printers to rework the formal conventions governing typography. These printers took up an emerging critique of baroque aesthetics, offered simultaneously by officials in the Catholic Church who turned towards sparer, more inward-looking forms of worship that rejected exuberant, heavily ornamented baroque displays and lavish rituals. 

Perhaps in dialogue with Gil, who brought work to local printshops for production, these printers experimented with neoclassical design, using updated typefaces in arrangements that repudiated baroque aesthetics. The difference can be seen starkly by contrasting two printed title pages, produced in the mid- and late-eighteenth century, respectively. (Figure 4) At left, the title page of a 1747 sermon is densely packed with type, and surrounded by a flowery decorative typographical border. Publication information—the pie de

21 “A Natural and Voluntary Dependence,” 279.
23 Voekel, Alone Before God, 47-51.
24 The celebrated type designer developed a working relationship with Mexico City’s printers, especially Felipe Zúñiga y Ontiveros, who printed the statues of San Carlos in 1785. Gil allegedly engraved a portrait of Zúñiga, which I have been unable to locate. Ernesto de la Torre Villar, Ilustradores de libros: guión biobibliográfico (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1999), 30. After Gil’s death, the new engraving teacher at the Academy of San Carlos, José Joaquín Fabregat, produced illustrations for Zúñiga’s calendar in 1793 Medina, La imprenta en México, CCXIV. Ontiveros also owned a set of matrices purchased from Gil. Sutro Library, Mexican Manuscripts, SMMS HG 1:5, “Avaluo de la imprenta que fue en esta Ciudad de Mexico de Dn Felipe de Zuñiga y Ontiveros” No date, but addendum dated 1814.
imprenta—is offset from the other textual items with plant-like elements that, arranged in a row, seem to undulate under the viewer’s gaze. On the right, the title page from a 1785 set of statutes for the newly established Academy of San Carlos appears, by contrast, exceedingly spare. The information being conveyed has been cut dramatically and the resulting composition is spread out with deliberate measure across the blank page. The type itself appears airier, with greater contrast between the thick and thin strokes of each letterform. Finally, the publication information has been separated by a linear rule, and the floral borders have been replaced with a lifelike wood engraving of a floral bouquet.

Figure 4: Contrasting title pages, 1747 (L) and 1785 (R).
Source: Google Books; Biblioteca Virtual de Patrimonio Bibliográfico, España
Although scholars have only just begun to consider how broader Enlightenment debates intersected with print production and styles in New Spain, the adoption of neoclassical aesthetics was by no means a uniform or linear phenomenon. The earliest known type specimen produced in New Spain bears this suggestion out. (Figure 5) In this broadsheet—designed to display the typographical offerings of the Calderón family business—typefaces are arranged within a dizzying series of shapes that display the virtuosity of the printshop. Evoking churrigueresque architecture, the specimen is nevertheless composed with new Spanish type that had been designed according to neoclassical principles by Jerónimo Antonio Gil himself.25 Those printers who did adopt the sparer neoclassical style and deployed new typographic designs, however, linked themselves to the aesthetic movement unfolding in the Academy of San Carlos and to the spirit of reform. Elite patrons, it seems, valued these typographical changes. When he transferred printing of his *Gazeta de Literature de México* to a newly-equipped printshop, its editor, the polymath José Antonio Alzate y Ramírez, praised the new editions as “printed correctly, and with beautiful characters.”26

25 Interestingly, this specimen emerged from the workshop of descendants of the Calderón family dynasty that had lost market share over the eighteenth century. The specimen is examined in Garone Gravier, “El comercio tipográfico matritense en México.”

Alzate y Ramírez formed part of a group that, in collaboration with a shifting cast of Mexico City printers and with official yet conditional support from viceregal officials,
expanded the range of offerings and quantity of imprints produced in the eighteenth century. New secular genres, like the news periodical *Gazeta de México* (founded in 1722, re-founded some months later, and for a third time in 1784 under the auspices of printer Manuel Antonio Valdés) and the literary/scientific publication *Gazeta de Literatura de México* (founded by Alzate y Ramírez in 1768, re-started in 1772, and again in 1788) appeared for the first time and gained traction in the final quarter of the eighteenth century. The growth in the number of imprints produced in Mexico City accelerated in the final decade of the eighteenth century and first decades of the nineteenth century, exemplified in the approved establishment of its first daily, the *Diario de México*, founded by Jacobo de Villaurrutia y López Osorio and Carlos María de Bustamante in 1805. Yet while the range of titles expanded, total output from printshops may have remained the same, as they produced more imprints with a small number of pages, perhaps aimed at popular audiences.

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27 A lovely graph of the printers operating in Mexico City during the eighteenth century can be found in Moreno Gamboa, "La imprenta y los autores novohispanos," 34. She was not aware of the fact that the Jauregui family were the heirs to the Calderón family, which Ken Ward discusses in his dissertation. Ward, "Mexico, Where They Coin Money and Print Books".


29 On the Diario de México’s contributors and thematic content, see Esther Martínez Luna, Estudio e índice onomástico del Diario de México, primera época, 1805-1812 (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2002); Susana María Delgado Carranco, Libertad de imprenta, política y educación: su planteamiento y discusión en el Diario de México, 1810-1817 (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2006).

30 Moreno Gamboa, "La imprenta y los autores novohispanos." See page 64 for number of imprints increase, and 77 for number of pages per volume. The increase in small works—many of which were devotional—likely dovetailed with the Catholic reform movement for a more individualized piety. On the competing devotional texts printed in the late eighteenth century, see Larkin, *The Very Nature of God*, 161-164.
The printer Felipe Zúñiga y Ontiveros—a proponent of neoclassical typography who also worked as a geographic surveyor—clearly saw himself as part of Mexico City’s intellectual milieu, not least because he produced an annual calendar based on his own astronomical observations. He fittingly commemorated his work in an engraving that illustrated his scientific process. (Figure 6) The 1770 engraving—likely the product of the printer’s artistic experimentation—celebrated Zúñiga’s own observation of the 1769 transit of Venus, an event recorded by numerous scientific expeditions launched to various points around the globe. The small engraving compresses time and space to show not one but four versions of Zúñiga y Ontiveros engaged in charting Venus’ course across the sky. Venus’ movement, similarly, is marked by a series of black dots across the face of the sun, whose path is made linear by a white line running parallel across its surface. As he works, he makes use of a range of scientific instruments—telescopes, an observatory, celestial (and terrestrial?) globes, compasses, measuring devices, and three clocks—strewn about and under a series of tables, where the observer in one instance furiously jots down his notes on paper. The presence of Zúñiga’s multiple selves in the image evoked a sense of time lapse, but also underscored the subject’s heroic accomplishment of many facets of a complex scientific task.

31 Suárez Rivera, “El negocio del libro en Nueva España,” 47-54.
32 Zúñiga’s observation and commemorative engraving are mentioned in José Joaquín Granados y Gálvez, Tardes americanas: gobierno gentil y catolico: breve y particular noticia de toda la historia indiana: sucesos, casos notables, y cosas ignoradas, desde la entrada de la gran nación tulteca á esta tierra de Anahuac, hasta los presentes tiempos (México: En la nueva imprenta matritense de D. F. de Zúñiga y Ontiveros, 1778), 416.
Figure 6: Zúñiga y Ontiveros’s engraving of his observation of the transit of Venus.  
Source: Sutro Library, Mexican Manuscripts, Felipe Zúñiga y Ontiveros, Efemérides, 1763-1774.

Another portrait of a prominent printer, Manuel Antonio Valdés, similarly highlighted its subject’s centrality to New Spain’s flourishing intellectual life. (Figure 7)

Born in Mexico City and trained as a craftsman in the Jesuit printshop of San Ildefonso, Valdés went to work for Zúñiga y Ontiveros before establishing his own printing business upon the latter’s death.33 In 1873, he re-founded the periodical Gazeta de México, which served as a source of official information and news from abroad for decades. Although the viceroy had also appointed a supervisor over content, Valdés described himself as the

33 Suárez Rivera, "El negocio del libro en Nueva España," 156-158.
author of the *Gazeta*, an identification repeated in the dedication for Valdés’s portrait, commissioned by his son upon the printer’s death in 1814. In the portrait—produced in the midst of an ongoing insurgency against the crown—Valdés is shown standing in his study in the act of composing a sonnet. Dressed in moderately sumptuous clothing, Valdés is foregrounded against a bookshelf filled with bound volumes, perhaps representing the *Gazeta* itself. His working space is spare, and Valdés works with singular focus on his task, with no material distractions in sight. The dedication connects the individual’s literary efforts to New Spain’s political power system, reminding viewers that Valdés filled the role of “Impresor de Cámara” during his lifetime.

Bourbon era printers operated at the point where scientific and literary culture intersected with viceregal power and religious regulation, although scholars of eighteenth century intellectual and scientific culture have yet to fully explore how points of connection operated on the ground. While the polymath Alzate had publicly praised his printer, other authors frequently grumbled about the delays and difficulties involved in publishing a manuscript in Mexico. The astronomer and writer Antonio de León y Gama, in a 1786 letter to the expelled Jesuit Agustín Pablo de Castro, lamented, “Would that one here might have the ease that exists over there for imprints! Here they cost a lot and licenses cost even more.” León y Gama’s comments revealed frustration with

34 AGN, Indiferente Virreinal, Impresos Oficiales, Caja 6062, Exp 22.
35 Moreno Gamboa, “La imprenta y los autores novohispanos,” 268-269.
Mexico City’s printing industry—he lamented that the press operated by the university rector Eguiara y Eguren, which underwrote printing of learned works, had ceased to operate—and in mentioning the high cost of licensing alluded to the government’s power to hinder writers’ publishing efforts.


Licensing remained a fundamental part of the legal framework that organized the printing trades and print production. Unlike other colonial-era trades, printers were not organized into a guild system that determined the rules of entry under royal sanction;
rather, after printers obtained permission to establish their workshops in Mexico City, government officials oversaw print production through routine communication with printers and authors. While specific works had to proceed through an inquisitorial censorship process prior to being printed, ultimate licensing for their printing rested with the viceroy, who also distributed privileges for key items like the *Gazeta*, government decrees, *cartillas*, and lottery tickets.

Printers navigated the licensing procedure even as the two institutions governing print production—the Inquisition and the viceroyalty—grew increasingly at odds after the crown expelled the Jesuits from its territories in 1767. Although official fears that revolutionary ideas would infiltrate the colonies from abroad in the form of prohibited books grew, the documentary record bears little evidence that local printers were unable to operate across the growing divide.

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39 Gabriel Torres Puga, *Los últimos años de la Inquisición en la Nueva España* (Mexico City: Miguel Angel Porriá / CONACULTA-INAH, 2004), 29-41. León y Gama’s comments to his Jesuit friend, likely referenced this reality.
40 In particular, the period between 1796 and 1806 was marked by an increase in censorship activities Cristina Gómez Álvarez and Guillermo Tovar de Teresa, *Censura y revolución: libros prohibidos por la Inquisición de México* (1790-1819) (Madrid: Trama Editorial / Consejo de la Crónica de la Ciudad de
On the ground, printers seem to have collaborated with officials in ways that suggested that the legal regulation of printing involved a degree of trust and accommodation regarding procedure. In 1775, for example, Manuel Antonio Valdés submitted a list of all the prayer books and *novenas* he had reprinted in the previous year at the Ontiveros printshop.\(^{41}\) Confident that the inquisitors would see no problems, Valdés explained that he was only submitting the latest reprints, omitting a list of his entire stock, which had been approved in previous years. Indeed, the overseeing official signed off on the list without checking any of the imprints in person. In 1783, Valdés solicited and received approval to expurgate problematic passages from the books sold in his store, suggesting Inquisition officials trusted him with the task.\(^{42}\) Not just authors, but also printers acting on behalf of authors submitted manuscripts to the Inquisition for censorship after receiving permission to publish.\(^{43}\) These routine interactions revealed

\(^{41}\) AGN, Instituciones Coloniales, Inquisición, año 1775, vol. 1103, exp. 4, fols. 61-62.
\(^{42}\) AGN, Instituciones Coloniales, Inquisición, año 1783, vol. 1196, exp. 22, fol. 264.
\(^{43}\) Printers submitted petitions for licenses after content had already been approved by religious authorities. María de Rivera, a frequent petitioner, submitted requests multiple times each year. O’Gorman, "Licencias para imprimir libros 1748-1770." In 1780, Valdés submitted a request for routine approval or two manuscripts, which he received. AGN, Indiferente Virreinal, General de Parte, caja 0245, exp. 003, año 1780, 3 fols. In 1795, Estevan Alvarez de Soto, petitioned the inquisition on behalf of Doña Rosa Teresa de Poveda, printer and the widow of Joseph Bernardo de Hogal, who solicited permission to publish a calendar written by Joseph Antonio Villaseñor y Sánchez. AGN Instituciones Coloniales, Inquisición, año 1795, vol. 1312, exp. SN, pp. 256-257.
that amidst official anxieties over foreign imprints and the circulation of information and ideas, local printers continued to act as important mediators who facilitated the regulatory process linking officials, authors, and readers.

**Imprints at War: Geographies of Authority and Ambivalent Attitudes towards Print**

Printers and viceregal officials collaborated throughout the eighteenth century. While critiques of government actions periodically circulated in rumors, handwritten poems and proclamations, and the very occasional imprint produced without license, locally made printed texts were overwhelmingly products that came into being with official sanction. The printer Zúñiga y Ontiveros, for example, reserved commenting on controversial issues for his personal diary, where he primarily recorded astronomical observations for his printed calendar but also jotted occasional private notes on local events in the margins. The archival record strongly suggests that printers cooperated with official strategies towards the broader world of communications, which vacillated over the last decades of the eighteenth century between tolerating and channeling debate.

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44 Gabriel Torres’s Puga’s research reveals that critical communications circulated in a lively world of commentary, in which critical communications circulated in Bourbon Mexico City, but primarily through manuscript (although the author considers various forms of communication fluidly without examining the implications of their production trajectories in detail). Controversial imprints, however, were extremely rare. For exceptions, see Torres Puga, *Opinión pública y censura en Nueva España*, 281, 325, 339. Printed images, on the other hand, followed a different paradigm altogether, as printmakers were not required to submit proofs to the inquisition. Donahue-Wallace, “Prints and Printmakers in Viceregal Mexico City, 1600-1800,” 21. On interactions between printmakers and the inquisition, see in particular Chapter 6.

45 Zúñiga y Ontiveros commented on number of calenders he had sold, outbreaks of illness, notable deaths, excommunications, autos de fé, arrival of ships bearing news from Spain, and successful patronage relations. Benson Library, Genaro Garcia Collection, Felipe Zúñiga y Ontiveros, “Efemérides,” 1751-1762; The second volume, 1763-1774, is held at the Sutro Library, and a third in the Biblioteca Nacional de España.
through propaganda or approved imprints and adopting a more hardline prohibitive
stance when politically expedient.46

Official monopoly over print and assumptions about the unshakeable ties between
printers and religious and viceregal authorities, however, were tested with the outbreak of
the Hidalgo revolt in the Bajío in September of 1810. Coming on the heels of the 1808
monarchical crisis provoked by Napoleon’s invasion of Spain and several conspiracies
against viceregal and royal power, the revolt, which spread throughout central Mexico
and threatened to overrun the capital city, represented the first instance in which locally
made print offered a self-conscious challenge to viceregal authorities. While historians of
print emphasize the arrival of Enlightenment ideas and freedom of the press legislation as
the primary factors that led to new conceptions of prints’ roles, the violent conflict and its
propaganda efforts may in fact have destabilized prints’ meanings to an equal—or
greater—degree.

The propaganda efforts of insurgents both reproduced and reimagined
longstanding assumptions about how print could be mobilized for political ends. Led by
renegade priest Miguel Hidalgo, insurgent forces released their own printed decrees,
proclamations, and news bulletins, at odds with crown communications. In doing so, they
displayed a sensibility towards print that both shared commonalities with and differed
from official practice. On the one hand, insurgents reproduced many of the symbolic uses
and stylistic devices that marked imprints as materializations of authority. This reflected

46 Torres Puga, Opinión pública y censura en Nueva España, 534.
both insurgents’ goals of constituting legitimacy and more mundane production realities.\textsuperscript{47} When Hidalgo’s forces commissioned a printshop in Guadalajara to make proclamations and the newspaper \textit{El Despertador Americano}, printers under the direction of administrator Trinidad Guitron produced documents that shared an obvious stylistic affinity with materials issued under the auspices of the royalist government in Mexico City.\textsuperscript{48}

On the other hand, rebels approached printing as a propaganda effort aimed at reaching audiences in ways that reimagined traditional communication circuits. War severely disrupted routine official communications, and rumors circulated freely in rural as well as urban areas.\textsuperscript{49} On top of this, for the first time, printed items originating in the rural hinterlands—especially after Hidalgo’s capture led rebels to retreat to rural strongholds—made their way into Mexico City, upended Mexico’s typical geographies of print, whereby production overwhelmingly concentrated in the capital city and imprints radiated outward from the center through communication circuits.

One incident illustrating this reversed flow of materials occurred in February of 1811, when officials arrested Tomás Manuel Chaves—whom the viceroy described as an indian—for smuggling “seditious imprints” into Mexico City from Yurirapúndaro, a

\textsuperscript{47} Insurgents’ efforts might also be understood as examples of sedition, as described in Van Young, \textit{The Other Rebellion}, 338.

\textsuperscript{48} Only two newspapers had been issued in Guadalajara before the Hidalgo revolt. Palacio Montiel, "La prensa en Guadalajara y Veracruz," 389-390. For an overview of the press in Guadalajara, see Carmen Castañeda García, \textit{Imprenta, impresores y periódicos en Guadalajara, 1793-1811} (Guadalajara: Editorial Agata, 1999). Initially, insurgents had printed a newspaper at a Guadalajara printshop, but that did not last long. The administrator, Buitron, freely gave up information about the insurgents when questioned. Archivo de la Real Audiencia de la Nueva Galicia, Ramo Criminal, caja 174, exp. 11, progresivo 2715.

\textsuperscript{49} Van Young, \textit{The Other Rebellion}, 328-333.
locality in the Bajío.\textsuperscript{50} Chaves had been sent to Mexico City to deliver the packet of printed documents to a city resident. The sender, Ignacio Martínez, had directed Chaves with the oral instructions to “spread the imprints through the streets.”\textsuperscript{51} Unfortunately for Chaves, the recipient turned the imprints, hidden in a false-bottomed box filled with lard, over to the authorities. Amplifying official concerns, the messenger had traveled to Mexico City from the Bajío, the region where insurgency had first broken out.\textsuperscript{52} With Chaves detained, the viceroy communicated with military officials based in the region to coordinate the arrest, questioning, and execution of the imprints’ sender.\textsuperscript{53}

Surviving documents attest to how official materials printed in Mexico City could even be repurposed by insurgents to symbolically challenge royal power, adding insult to injury from the battlefield: in June of 1813, insurgent leader José María Morelos received (perhaps captured?) an April printed message from the archbishop-elect of Mexico, Antonio Bergosa y Jordán. Formerly the bishop of Oaxaca, Bergosa y Jordán had resisted Morelos’ troops when they captured that city in November of 1812, and was subsequently named archbishop-elect of Mexico (he never formally assumed the post). The pamphlet, part of the bishop-elect’s efforts to connect with parish priests around the archdiocese,

\textsuperscript{50} AGN, Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 810, exp. 25-27, fol. 86. “impresos sediciosos”
\textsuperscript{51} AGN, Operaciones de Guerra, Vol 810, exp 25-27, fols. 86-90. “desparramase los impresos por las calles”
\textsuperscript{52} Yurirapúndaro also appeared in the archival record in 1817, when military officers discovered that rebels had stuck more imprints in the windows of houses and scattered around the military detachment in the middle of the night. They sent the confiscated copies to the viceroy for revision. AGN, Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 507, exp. 6, fols. 95, 109-110.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid, fol. 89. Investigations turned up a different Martínez at a differently named ranch, and the intelligence that Ignacio Martínez was known as “solemn barbarian and thief by profession, and a despicable individual incapable of reasoning”/“es ladrón de profesión, como un solemne barbaro y despreciable incpaz de raciocinar”
informed priests of his new post and urged them to resist the insurgency. Morelos, stationed to the south in Chilpancingo, where insurgents would hold their first constitutional congress, ordered that the decree be returned to officials in Mexico City, but not before adding a series of critical and sarcastic marginal annotations, including the impudent signed heading, “Return this since this Archbishop is not elected by the legitimate American government because the Regency of Spain only commands in its own house.”

(Figure 8)

Figure 8: Detail, 1813 pamphlet returned to sender by insurgent leader José María Morelos, with marginalia.
Source: AGN, Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 939, exp 129, fol. 194.

54 AGN, Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 939, exp. 129, fols. 194-5.
55 After Morelos’ capture in 1815, Bergosa y Jordán—who by then had been appointed Grand Inquisitor—presided over the insurgent’s public defrocking during his inquisition trial in Mexico City.
Incidents like these and circulating rumors stoked viceregal worries about insurgent defiance and propaganda, which officials had actively countered with an outpouring of royalist messages, printed in the months after the outbreak of the Hidalgo Revolt. Propagandists with royal sponsorship targeted urban residents, attempting to prevent solidarity from forming between lower social sectors and their rural counterparts through appeals to familiar notions of authority and condescending mockery towards insurgents. News in the *Gazeta de México* frequently downplayed rebel success to boost morale. Although a flood of rebel imprints never arrived in Mexico City to compete with royalist output, insurgent production never ceased entirely.

While printing presses had long operated in the city of Puebla and recently arrived in Guadalajara (1793) and Veracruz (1794), rebel leaders took their press with them on the move throughout Mexico’s rural interior. At least one press, according to insurgent chronicler Carlos María de Bustamante, was smuggled out of Mexico City by José Revelo, a worker in the printshop of Juan Baptista Arizpe. Communicating with

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56 The biggest concentration of imprints appeared between September and December. Hamill, "Royalist Propaganda and "La Porción Humilde del Pueblo" during Mexican Independence," 442. Another example of rumor—in the form of an anonymous note—is described in Van Young, *The Other Rebellion*, 330-331.
57 Hamill, "Royalist Propaganda and "La Porción Humilde del Pueblo" during Mexican Independence," 428. Propagandists also recurred to dehumanization of insurgents by comparing them to animals Marco Antonio Landavazo, "Guerra, discurso y terror en la independencia de México," in *Creación de estados de opinión en el proceso de independencia mexicano (1808-1823)*, ed. Laura Suárez de la Torre (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2010), 105-106. On the viceroy’s appeal to propagandists and their profiles, see Víctor Gayol, "Escritores cortesanos y rebelión. La breve respuesta de los letrados a los sucesos de 1810 en México," in *Las guerras de independencia en la América española*, ed. Marta Terán and José Antonio Serrano Ortega (Mexico City: Colegio de Michoacán / Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo / Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2002), 149-164.
58 The *Gazeta* also “mediate[d] relations among the royalist militia” by printing field reports that might advance individuals’ careers. Van Young, *The Other Rebellion*, 348-349.
59 The dates of this smuggling are unclear, but occurred sometime before mid-1812. Bustamante’s telling of the story almost seems too good not to be apocryphal, but Revelo indeed worked for insurgents, as
supporters in Mexico City, insurgents learned that a printing press had been put up for sale by a Spaniard for eight hundred pesos. Because nobody suspected the printer Revelo of harboring rebel sympathies—perhaps precisely because of his status as a printer, and one who furthermore worked in the office responsible for producing the official *Gazeta del Gobierno de México*—he purchased the press with money fronted by urban partisans, pretending to be going into business for himself. Revelo then allegedly stowed the press in a carriage and traveled, along with several women who were the wives of insurgents, out of the city, where he joined rebel forces.

Printing in rural areas—where equipment and expertise were almost nonexistent—presented enormous challenges. In July of 1812, insurgent leader Ignacio López Rayón reported on the good state of their recently acquired printing press. By year’s end, he was less positive, explaining that with only Revelo to run the press, operations had slowed. “[The press] has one reasonable day,” he lamented, “and four bad [days]; it is sluggish.” The bad days likely resulted from the press’s having to be dismantled and transported from place to place. Lack of paper, furthermore, could make

documents referenced in footnote 62 attest. Carlos María de Bustamante, *Cuadro histórico de la revolución mexicana, comenzada en 15 de septiembre de 1810 por el ciudadano Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla*, vol. 1 (Mexico City: Impr. de J. M. Lara, 1843), 407. Incident also discussed in Gómez Álvarez and Tovar de Teresa, *Censura y revolución: libros prohibidos por la Inquisición de México (1790-1819)*, 84.

60 AGN, Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 939, exp. 21, fol. 31. Ignacio Rayón to José María Liceaga, December 14, 1812. “este [la imprenta] tiene un día razonable y cuatro malos, está entorpecida.”

61 AGN, Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 939, exp. 19, fol. 24. Ignacio Rayón to José María Liceaga, September 23, 1812.
the press irrelevant. After insurgent activity had been severely curtailed in 1814, rebel holdouts desperately tried to get their hands on this critical material.63

Back in Mexico City, awareness about the trickle of insurgent propaganda dovetailed with the arrival of news from Spain that freedom of the press had been declared in the constitution ratified by the Cortes de Cádiz in November of 1811. The viceroy Venegas resisted publication of the constitution, however, until finally relenting on October 5, 1812.64 As Mexico City residents prepared to participate in the first town council elections, a series of liberal-leaning publications emerged from the printshops of the capital city, including Carlos María de Bustamante’s El Juguetillo (The Plaything) and writer José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi’s El Pensador Mexicano (The Mexican Thinker) from which the latter acquired his nickname.65 When the slate of electors turned out to be comprised entirely of creoles—suspected of favoring autonomy over the viceroyalty—Venegas canceled elections and suspended the free press on December 5.66

After Calleja replaced Venegas as viceroy in 1813, he maintained his predecessor’s de

63 Having learned that several individuals in the town of Yurira (near Querétaro) knew how to make paper, officials of a short-lived rebel governing body instructed subalterns to entice the papermakers to work for the insurgency, or at least get their hands on a good recipe for making paper in Querétaro. Benson Library, Hernández y Dávalos Collection, HD 8.651.116 (831, Junta Subalterna, Nov-Dec 1815); HD 9-3.874 (855 Junta Subalterna, December 6, 1815).
64 For a chronological overview of press legislation’s enactment in Spain and Mexico between 1810 and 1820, see Clarice Neal, “Freedom of the Press in New Spain, 1810-1820,” in Mexico and the Spanish Cortes, 1810-1822: Eight Essays, ed. Nettie Lee Benson (Austin: University of Texas Press, Institute of Latin American Studies, 1966), 87-112. The inquisition was soon abolished as well by the Cortes, in February of 1813. Gómez Álvarez and Tovar de Teresa, Censura y revolución: libros prohibidos por la Inquisición de México (1790-1819), 87-88.
65 Anna, The Fall of the Royal Government in Mexico City, 109.
66 Ibid., 113. At this time, Bustamante fled Mexico City to join rebels and Lizardi was imprisoned. Neal, “Freedom of the Press in New Spain, 1810-1820,” 95.
facto ban on freedom of the press—at odds with the Cortes in Spain, which demanded accountability but lacked enforcement power.\textsuperscript{67}

In May of 1814, Fernando VII reassumed the Spanish throne, abolishing the liberal Cortes and the constitution. Previous rules governing print production were reinstated, but a new declaration was not published in Mexico City until July of the following year.\textsuperscript{68} As war dragged on, meanwhile, official enthusiasm for supporting extraordinary propaganda efforts in print waned. One of Mexico’s prominent royalist propagandists, Agustín Pomposo Fernández de San Salvador, struggled to get financial backing from the viceroy Calleja, who seemed less inclined to pay for printing than his predecessor. In an August 1814 letter, Fernández de San Salvador pitched a plan to Calleja by forwarding another letter, dated five months earlier, that he claimed had been left anonymously on his doorstep five days before.\textsuperscript{69} The letter, sent from Pueblo de Santa Cruz and signed by \textit{El Patriota Americano} (The American Patriot), exhorted Fernández de San Salvador to renew his propaganda efforts so that imprints would arrive to rural areas, where they remained scarce. Printed materials were so hard to come by, the letter writer explained, that a priest had offered him a gold \textit{onza} for his copy of the Cádiz constitution, which he had brought from Querétaro. He urged Fernández de San Salvador to use his influence and prestige to lobby the government to ramp up its printing program. The propagandist, he suggested, should take advantage of the free press laws to publish a

\textsuperscript{68} Delgado Carranco, \textit{Libertad de imprenta, política y educación}, 80.
\textsuperscript{69} AGN, Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 760, exp. 18, fols. 101-119, March 3, 1814-December 9, 1814.
pamphlet exhorting the viceregal government to provide at least two copies of the constitution to all the local *Ayuntamientos* (municipal governments), along with other imprints, which could be sold. Thanks to the “prodigious consumption” of printed materials that would surely follow, this move would accomplish the dual “benefit to the public” of spreading instruction and augmenting the central treasury. With such a plan, the writer argued, “they will snuff out this terrifying revolution sooner than with bayonets and bullets.”

If the anonymous letter were genuine, the fact that its author thought freedom of the press, which had been suspended by viceregal decree for over a year, remained in effect in Mexico City suggested that news of its revocation had not reached all corners of the viceroyalty, where the printed constitution attested to its continued existence. Whether or not Fernández de San Salvador had forged this letter of support, the text offered a rural paradigm for understanding print: as items that circulated with great scarcity, especially during wartime when communication circuits broke down. Scarcity did not mean that printed materials were unimportant relative to other means of communication. On the contrary, the anecdote revealed they might acquire immense value for individuals of means desperate for information and invested, like the priest who tried to buy the constitution, in the symbolic meaning assigned to imprints produced in Mexico City.

The Viceroy responded to Fernández de San Salvador’s plan to remedy the problem of rural print scarcity with skepticism as he mused on what action the

71 Ibid “Apagarán esta espantosa Revolución mas pronto que las ballonetas y las balas.”
government should take vis-à-vis official imprints. The constitution, the viceroy explained, had already been disseminated through all the appropriate channels: “the proper number of copies” had been sent to all the important regional officials. The balance of copies was on sale in the treasury, for all who wished to acquire them. As for the suggestion to circulate other printed propaganda, Calleja expressed his wish to underwrite propaganda to be distributed for free, commenting that this was, after all, “the only means by which they might spread.” The government’s difficult financial position made such a tactic impossible, however, and Calleja had already resorted to selling official imprints via the royal treasury. Suppose, the viceroy posited, that the government could not expect sales in greater volume than any other given individual. If these individuals are currently unable to find a market for their imprints, why should the government enjoy any greater success? “The unfortunate thing is that there is no disposition towards buying rational productions: if these were successful, hombres instruidos (learned men) would not need stimulus; and you are a good witness to this truth.”

Calleja’s perspective—contrasting markedly with Fernández de San Salvador’s position—revealed a less optimistic outlook on the role print could play in Mexico as a source for spreading rational ideas. The problem, he suggested, was not with the objects themselves or even with their networks of distribution: he had brushed off the notion that

72 Ibid, fol. 109. “única medio de que se divulgasen.”
73 Ibid, fol. 109 verso. “El mal está en que no hay disposición para comprar producciones racionales: si estas tuvieran salida, los hombres instruidos no necesitaran de estímulo; y Vd. es buen testigo de esta verdad.”
official imprints like the constitution were not reaching their target audiences. Rather, the problem lay with Mexico’s market for rational printed items: there simply was no market. Calleja’s jab at Fernández de San Salvador’s own troubles suggest that the latter had experienced this phenomenon firsthand. In the end, the Viceroy offered Fernández de San Salvador some financial support for the printing, and helped the author by distributing copies to the various bishops in Mexico. The bishop of Puebla, for his part, promised to spread the word to parishioners but expressed skepticism that any hearts or minds—hardened by perversity and vice—would be changed, adding the doubtful caveat that “it is impossible to promise any great results.”

Official doubts about print’s ability to sway hearts and minds only increased over time. In later years, solicitations for viceregal help might resemble an 1818 letter from Manuel Toral, a priest from the nearby town of Amecameca, who sent the viceroy Apodaca a stack of pamphlets he had printed in Mexico City, asking him to send them wherever he deemed best, “so that the masses become acquainted with them.” Apodaca forwarded the pamphlets on to a mere four military commanders, suggesting that officials no longer looked to printed items as effective tools of propaganda. Military force, rather than imprints, seemed more useful as conflict dragged on.

The wars of independence might be looked upon as a period in which opposing camps experimented with new uses for print. While insurgents used print to challenge

74 AGN, Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 760, exp. 19, fol. 121. “no se pueden prometer grandes resultados.”
75 AGN, Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 795, exp. 2, fol. 3. “para que la masa de los pueblos se imponga en ellos.”
royal power by establishing their own parallel (if markedly inferior) printing apparatus, royalist propagandists like Fernández de San Salvador imagined they might reach out to urban and rural audiences in mediated and sometimes unmediated ways to change people’s minds with printed pamphlets, poems, and broadsides. Viceregal officials increasingly seemed ambivalent, especially when faced with footing the bill for printing costs. For the first time in sustained fashion, print moved in new circuits and became objects of scrutiny in new ways, both from the perspective of urban officials and rural inhabitants. Yet on the other hand, the material realities of production meant that propaganda campaigns would never take off as individuals like Fernández de San Salvador and his rural informant the Patriota Americano imagined might be possible. Instead, the opening of freedom of the press—again provoked by changes in Spain—would re-focus official attentions on the role of print as a medium for conducting politics in the much more narrowly focused world of urban Mexico City.

Public Persons or Private Actors? Debating the Printer’s Role under Freedom of the Press

While it is easy to assume that Mexico City printers might have harbored sympathies towards the insurgent cause—as the public writer Carlos María Bustamante did when he fled the city to join the rebellion—Mexico City printers’ relationships with officials appear to have remained close throughout the wars of independence. Rules established by the Cortes de Cádiz requiring that the viceregal government remit copies of all imprints made in New Spain strengthened regular communications between local
officials and printshops. In rare cases when questionable imprints came to light, printers cleared up the misunderstanding, as in 1815, when a series of small leaflets appeared tacked outside various businesses, proclaiming “Two great objects should occupy the attention of an hombre de bien (respectable man). The first that which he owes to God, and this he will accomplish with the acts of religion, and obedience to His law. The second that which he owes to his fellow man, and this he will execute according to the obligations of his station, and with acts of compassion.” (Figure 9) Because the leaflet, signed with the letters M.A.G.T., had been printed without permission in violation of viceregal orders, Calleja ordered an investigation and a fine of five hundred pesos for the offending printer. Officials soon identified the author as Manuel Antonio Gil Taboada, in large part because he had purposefully posted the bills in broad daylight at points of commerce.

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76 Local officials produced weekly tallies of all imprints made in Mexico City, listing titles by printshop. While not an explicit oversight measure, the routine collecting of information required some kind of regular correspondence between printers and government officials, especially Ramon Gutiérrez del Mazo, the Intendent corregidor of Mexico. For examples of accounting lists dating from 1811-1815, see AGN, Operaciones de Guerra, vol 760, exp. 7-SN, fols. 32-76; vol. 360, exps. 7-23; vol. 367, exps. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13.

77 AGN, Indiferente Virreinal, Impresos Oficiales, caja 4088, exp 19. fol. 27. “Dos grandes objetos deben ocupar la atención de un hombre de bien. El primero lo que debe a diós, y éste lo cumplirá con los actos de la religión, y la obediencia a su ley. El segundo lo que debe a su próximo, y esto lo ejecutará cumpliendo con las obligaciones de su estado, y con las obras de misericordia.”
Figure 9: Confiscated handbills printed without approval in 1815, commissioned by Manuel Antonio Gil Taboada.
Source: AGN, Indiferente Virreinal, Impresos Oficiales, caja 4088, exp. 19.

Taboada explained that he had commissioned and posted the bills—containing an adaptation of a passage from the third volume of Pablo de Olavide’s *El evangelio en triunfo*—as a response to “an ugly, very ugly, abominable (so he has heard told) pasquín (satirical handbill)” that had circulated a criticism of individuals in the government.\(^78\)

When officials confronted the Castilian administrator in the printshop of Benavente, the printer freely admitted to his activities, explaining that Taboada had commissioned the imprints for a religious school. Since “their content is nothing subversive, and being very short,” and since Taboada had included his initials and signed the printer’s log to boot,

\(^{78}\) Ibid, fol. 33. Gil Taboada had paid 20 reales for 100 copies of the leaflet. “un pasquín feo, feísimo, abominable (según ha oído decir)”
the administrator saw no problem with printing the item. While there is no evidence as to whether the printer suffered the 500 peso fine, his response suggested that a set of informal commonsensical rules may have governed print production—especially for ephemeral items—parallel to formal rules policed by the viceroy.

When Spain re-established freedom of the press legislation in 1820 and the viceroy followed suit, longtime rules—dictated or negotiated—changed significantly. At first, a flurry of political pamphlets, periodicals, and broadsides emerged touching on political issues like the enactment of the constitution, the implications of freedom of the press, and the institution of the Inquisition. Over the course of months, an expanded cast of writers experimented with new forms of address and debate in printed materials. Jean Franco has argued that such debates imagined new audiences that, much as the viceroy Calleja had lamented to the propagandist Fernández de San Salvador in 1814, simply did not exist: a bourgeois market for printed items did not materialize overnight with freedom of the press. Similarly, conditions of production changed very little. Three small printing businesses—likely stocked with a single printing press and worn-out type purchased from one of the city’s four larger workshops—offered new services, but familiar printers like Alejandro Valdés (son of Manuel Antonio) and Mariano Zúñiga y Ontiveros (son of Felipe) remained dominant figures in the trade.

79 Ibid, fol. 34 “su contenido no es nada subversivo, y de consiguiente muy cortos” The administator’s name was de la Cantera.
80 Torres Puga, Los últimos años de la Inquisición en la Nueva España, 181-185.
81 Jean Franco makes this argument based on the works of José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi. Franco, "En espera de una burgesía," 35.
An 1820 broadside—a didactic *Dialogue between Don Ruperto and the Printer*—hammered home the point in its portrayal of the printer as a sober law abider who, in step with official regulations, educates and moderates the wild excesses of Don Ruperto, an uncouth would-be author intent on using new-found liberty to gleefully wreak havoc—“to drive ourselves crazy and tear each other apart.”\(^{82}\) If Don Ruperto represented the dangers posed by freedom of the press (not least of which included his ill education), the printer looked like a sturdy and respectable supporter of moderation and the status quo.

Writers quickly perceived that freedom of the press, while offering a new legal framework, did not function as a lever that opened the floodgates to the free circulation of print. On the contrary, Mexico City printers had quite suddenly gained new importance as gatekeepers to the world of knowledge production. Even though the inquisition was suppressed and freedom of the press established, printer’s actions bore real consequences for the implementation of freedom of the press on the ground, especially given their close ties to official power.

In the second half of 1820, an article published in the *Conductor Eléctrico*, a newspaper edited by José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi and printed in the Imprenta de Ontiveros, criticized the practices of the printer Alejandro Valdés.\(^{83}\) Writing under his initials, J.G.T.P., José de Gregorio Torres Palacios, recounted how Valdés had thwarted his exercise of freedom of the press. Although he did not name Valdés directly, he clearly

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\(^{82}\) *Diálogo entre D. Ruperto y el Impresor. Traslado al Observador del Observador J. y suplemento al Noticioso General num 751*, (Mexico City: Impreso en la oficina de D. J. M. Benavente y Socios, 1820). “rompernos todas las cabezas, y dezpedazarnos unos a otros”

\(^{83}\) The edition is not dated, but the second number contains a letter dated June, 1820.
referenced the printer by his other well-known public identity: Valdés had recently been elected to Mexico City’s town council as a regidor (councilman). Being the only regidor who also owned a printshop, the connection was more than obvious. Torres Palacios’ submission to the Conductor Eléctrico laid out his unfortunate situation. “I wanted to praise by means of an imprint a writer who has deserved public esteem, and [had] gone to the three printshops in this capital, pleading with all deference that they do me the favor (at my cost) to print it for me.” Establishing the relationship between printer and would-be author as one in which the former wielded great power and thus required due deference, Torres Palacios explained that he had been rejected by the first two—one, the Imprenta de Ontiveros, had presses occupied by government work—but at the third had been instructed to return the following week. Returning on the appointed day, the author was told to wait further, and upon returning to insist, was met with “vile words” from the shop’s administrator: “I have orders from the owner that the author who wishes to have his paper printed, in addition to paying its just and stipulated costs, must share the profits that result with the owner of the office.” The printer’s reason, he explained was that “we earn more printing cartillas, for which there is a license, than for those papers that only leave us a miserable profit.”

84 J.G.T.P., "Comunicado," El conductor eléctrico, no. 18 (1820): 154. “Quise elogiar por medio de un papel á un escritor que ha merecido la estimación del público, y habiendo andado las tras imprentas de esta capital, suplicando con toda sumisión me hiciesen el favor (por mi dinero) de imprimirmelo.
85 Ibid., 155. “tengo orden del amo que el autor que quiera se le imprima su papel, a mas de pagar sus justos y estipulados costos, han de ser divisibles las utilidades que le resulten con el dueño de la oficina.”
86 Ibid. “mas cuenta nos tiene imprimir cartillas (para lo que ya hay licencia) que esos papeles que únicamente nos dejan una ratera utilidad.”
Torres Palacios expressed incredulity at the printer’s brazen demands: “Does this seem to you,” he asked the newspaper editor, “the example that a Father of the *Patria*, lover of his fellow citizens, should give to us?” Questioning whether the printer’s actions did not represent a further continuation of historic injustices, Torres Palacios suggested Valdés’s actions made him unfit to uphold the honor of his public office. The would-be author had tried to reason with the printer, countering with an offer of one third of the profits, which he suggested might not even be forthcoming from his modest run of 500 broadsides. Yet Valdés held firm and Torres Palacios left the shop “roasted, not only because he demanded that I pay what is neither just nor customary, but due to the despotic fashion in which I was treated.”

Suggesting that the “barbarous revision” authors suffered at the hands of printshop administrators was worse than “the censorship we used to suffer,” the article accused only “true egoists” of being able to pay the price, which prevented humbler writers from publishing at all. The brief communiqué raised the critical point that being allowed by law to publish did not guarantee that one would be able to afford to do so. Although José de Gregorio Torres Palacios did not accuse Valdés of directly violating the law by demanding extra for printing up pamphlets, he suggested such actions broke with the spirit of freedom of the press. Furthermore, he stated that the printer violated customary expectations governing print production, and thus engaged in dishonorable

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87 Ibid. “Qué le parece a vd., Señor Pensador, será este el ejemplo que nos debe dar un Padre de la Patria, amante á sus conciudadanos?”
88 Ibid. “salgo de allí tostado, no solo porque se me exigia que pagara lo que no es justo ni costumbre, sino por el despótico modo con que fui tratado.”

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conduct. By highlighting Valdés’s preference for producing *cartillas*—cards for religious and primary language instruction—whose printing was licensed through the privilege system, the author painted Valdés as a creature of the old order rather than an upholder of constitutional principles.  

These comments suggested that the long-established yet unwritten customs governing local print production mattered just as much as new legislation.

The author’s critique raised the question of how freedom of the press was supposed to function in relation to a pre-existing, yet transforming economy of print. New constitutional guidelines on intellectual property offered few solutions to the dilemma faced by Torres Palacios, and indeed, the author did not mention this law in his critique of printer power. Issued in June of 1813, the “rules for writers to conserve the property of their works” recognized writers’ exclusive rights over the printing of their writings during their lifetime. These rights could be granted by the author to others, or upon the author’s death would pass for ten years to the author’s heirs. While aimed at preventing others from re-printing and profiting from the author’s works without permission, the decree contained no specific provision that limited the economic demands printers might make on authors before publication.

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89 Valdés perhaps had obtained license to print the cartillas by virtue of having acquired the printing business of María Fernández de Jauregui in 1817. Jauregui, a descendant of the Calderón printing dynasty, had kept the cartilla monopoly until the dynasty ended soon after the death of María de la Ribera Medina, *La imprenta en México*, CXCVIII.

90 Manuel Dublán and José María Lozano, *Legislación mexicana ó, Colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la República*, vol. I (Mexico City: Imprenta del Comercio de E. Dublán y Comp., 1876), 412. Num 121, “Decreto de 10 de Junio de 1813—Reglas para conservar a los escritores la propiedad de sus obras.”
As Torres Palacios contested Valdés’s behavior, he argued that the printer’s ability to set prices should be limited against the author’s right to publish. Based on his experiences, Torres Palacios suggested that printers wielded substantial economic power—enough to prevent all but the wealthiest (or most egotistical) authors from getting published at all. In Torres Palacios’ view, print represented a good that should be purchasable at a fixed price. The author should retain all rights over the profits of his work. Such a conception of print, he implied, was crucial to the functioning of freedom of the press—a concept the author used as the underlying principle in his argument. Yet if Valdés’s paraphrased statements were true, the printer viewed his rights as extending beyond the initial moment of production through a profit-sharing agreement. Controlling print production meant having the right to exercise power towards maximizing profits. Given the small number of presses operating in the city, Valdés seemed to have the power to insist on the printer’s economic rights over the author’s. While he did not invoke the charge of monopoly explicitly, José de Gregorio Torres Palacios used the *Conductor Eléctrico* to shame Valdés by painting him as greedy and questioning his loyalty to the emerging constitutional order.

The editor of the *Conductor Eléctrico*, meanwhile, seemed slightly uncomfortable with José de Gregorio Torres Palacios’ position. Directly below the critical article, an italicized disclaimer proclaimed, “Public editors are not responsible for the outside opinions they print in their newspapers and that they should print with impartiality, as long as they are not contrary to Religion and they are assured with the signatures of their authors.” As the first such disclaimer in the newspaper’s run, it seemed aimed at heading
off a legal suit. In fact, the editor Lizardi was already involved tangentially in a dispute with Alejandro Valdés over his failure to uphold their agreement for the publication of his novel, *La Quixotita*. Because Lizardi had failed to pay his printing costs in the past—according to Valdés—the printer had required he present the signature of a guarantor to cover expenses. When sales fell far short of expenses and Lizardi’s backer, José Manuel Palomino, failed to cover the author’s debts as promised, Valdés had sued Palomino for the balance.

In the midst of the unfolding legal suit, the nature of Lizardi’s relationship to Valdés remained unclear. In his testimony, Valdés claimed he had warned Palomino upfront about Lizardi’s unreliability. “I told him that El Pensador owed me from other imprints,” Valdés explained, “whose cost I had not been able to obtain, and I warned him of the danger he risked.” Yet although Valdés had sought payment from Palomino since 1819, Lizardi published several works at the Valdés printshop the following year, suggesting the printer and writer had reached some kind of agreement. When he published Torres Palacios’ criticism of Valdés’s business practices in *El Conductor Eléctrico* the following year, however, Lizardi did seem to provoke the printer on purpose, suggesting their relationship had become strained.

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92 Ibid., 136.
93 Ibid., 176. “le hice presente que El Pensador me era deudor de otras impresiones, cuyo cobro no había podido conseguir, y le advertí el peligro que corría.”
94 Ibid., 136. Perhaps the printer tolerated the writer’s irregular payments if he suspected imprints would turn a profit. Another possibility not entertained by Vogeley is that Valdés had colluded with Lizardi (or Lizardi alone had endeavored) to outsource risk for the novel’s printing to a hapless third party.
Alejandro Valdés indeed took issue with Torres Palacios’ characterization and used his own press to issue a four-page refutation, which he addressed not to Torres Palacios, but to the *Pensador* Lizardi himself. Thumbing his nose at the author, Valdés distributed his pamphlet for free. Clearing up the misunderstanding, Valdés countered that he had rejected J.G.T.P.’s manuscript not for economic reasons, but rather precisely because two other printshops had already rejected the manuscript. The economic negotiations—which prompted J.G.T.P.’s complaint in the first place—actually represented a pretext that Valdés had instructed his administrator to use so that they could turn the writer down without explaining the true reason for the rejection. Thus, Valdés had asked for the high price of shared profits knowing the author would find it excessive and, when J.G.T.P. had countered with thirds, “I curtly answered him, No.” Valdés furthermore denied that he had asked J.G.T.P. to pay for the costs of printing.

Redirecting the conversation away from the question of freedom of the press, which he dismissed as “a very different thing,” Valdés instead focused on the rights of the printer to serve the customers he chose, invoking liberal notions of will and consent to counter charges of illiberal activity. Just as an author might choose the printshop in which to have a work produced, so too might a printer choose what patrons to serve: “the Constitution,” he explained, “does not alter these principles.” “Printshops,” he continued, “are offices of a determined industry that serve the public through the people

95 Alejandro Valdés, *La prensa libre* (Mexico City: En su oficina, 1820).
96 Ibid., 1. “Le contesté secamente, que no.”
97 Ibid., 2. “La Constitución no altera estos principios.”

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that need it, and pay for it via innominate contract *facio ut des.*”\(^{98}\) However, “the owner will be obligated to print in general, and not precisely the works of a determined person, since doing this depends on his will.”\(^{99}\)

Valdés refuted Torres Palacios’ claim about his financially motivated reasons for not accepting the publication precisely because he wanted to talk about finances. Indeed, after revealing and justifying his real motives, he turned to defending the practice of how printers charged authors for their imprints. “As a printer, I can propose as many companies as I see fit; and if interested parties agree to my proposals, I will not have erred.”\(^{100}\) In all of Europe and in “the most civilized cities,” Valdés explained, printers and bookselling companies used a range of techniques to produce printed works. Some purchased an author’s work outright and printed it at their expense, others shared profits and costs equally with the author, still others paid for the printing costs and took a half to two-thirds of the profits. The enterprise of printing, he argued, might take any number of forms, and commercial risks might be born in a variety of ways, but free consent of the parties involved remained constant, and Valdés argued he had upheld the principle of free consent, as J.G.T.P. had proposed the counter offer of one third profit-sharing, and Valdés had refused.

\(^{98}\) Ibid., 1. “Las imprentas son oficinas de determinada industria para servir al público en las personas que lo necesiten, y lo paguen por medio del contrato innominado *facio ut des.*”

\(^{99}\) Ibid. “el dueño estará obligado a imprimir en general, y no precisamente las obras de determinada persona, por depender hacerlo de su voluntad.”

\(^{100}\) Ibid., 2. “Yo como impresor puedo proponer cuantas compañías me parezcan; y si los interesados se avinieren á mis propuestas, en nada pecaré.”

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The printer defended his position against J.G.T.P.’s accusations by citing a list of all the pamphlets—a motley assortment—he had recently printed on terms that had been agreeable to their authors. Given his track record, why would Valdés have treated only J.G.T.P. differently? “Is it because he is the most famous,” mocked Valdés, “and the one who most makes the presses sweat?” Arguing that his success as a printer actually helped him better fulfill his job as a councilman—due, in large part to his economic independence and, by extension not having to “depend on petty thieving to survive”—Valdés signed off with a reply that reworked his critic’s jabs. Far from being self-serving, the printer attributed his success to “public and private urgencies that demand my principal attention.” More interested in defending himself against accusations of unfair and illiberal business practices, Valdés had no problem admitting to engaging in a process of customer discrimination, whereby the city’s printshops could simply refuse to publish an author’s work based on its merit. The printer could wield his economic power however he saw fit. Anyone who didn’t like it would be free to take his business to the other shops in town.

In response, the Conductor Eléctrico’s editor Lizardi—who only indirectly challenged Alejandro Valdés when he printed Torres Palacios’ critique—offered an observation in his periodical’s subsequent issue that tried to work out a better paradigm for cooperation between Mexico City’s printers and authors under the new rubric of freedom of the press. Rather than recognize that printers wielded the upper hand, Lizardi

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101 Ibid., 3. “Si será por ser el de más fama, y que más hacer sudar las prensas”
102 Ibid., 4. “las urjencias públicas y las privadas son las que arrebatan mi principal atención.”
presented a vision founded on the mutual upholding of authors’ and printers’ responsibilities. Lizardi began with an anecdote, recounting a case in Havana where an official had visited a printshop to demand the name of the author responsible for an injurious anonymous imprint. Obeying the official even though he was not supposed to under press laws, the printer handed over the name. The official subsequently sought out the writer and killed him; now, both official and printer languished in prison awaiting punishment. “Holy freedom of the press is not the cause of these excesses, as its enemies falsely claim;” rather, those who violated the rules were to blame, Lizardi explained. Here, Lizardi not only responded to frequently expressed worries that freedom of the press would provoke dangerous consequences; he also identified printers as a potential danger.

Lizardi’s moralizing tale tried to establish guidelines for printers’ responsibilities under the new legal system, warning printers not to reveal the identities of anonymous authors unless subjected to legal inquiry. Describing a world in which print provoked actions with dire consequences, Lizardi imagined the printer as a potential accessory to murder. Well aware of the community that collaborated to produce print, he also charged printshop administrators, typesetters, and press operators with maintaining the secrecy of authorial identities as a matter of public security. Printers received special admonition, however, as they “will always be responsible before God, the law, and the people (pueblo) for their weaknesses or malice:” if something happened in Mexico like it did in

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Havana, the guilty printer would surely be punished, and Lizardi invoked multiple sources of authority (God, law, the people) to maximize his entreaty. Lizardi also appealed to the city’s printers’ sense of public spirit, arguing that since they were made wealthy by public commissions, they should serve the entire public without discrimination. No excuses—from preferring one imprint over another, to “the specious pretext that they are busy, that other items earn more, nor that the paper seems harsh”—should be acceptable, since printers “are not censors nor judges of the works.”

Yet if printers had to meet certain standards, Lizardi also explained to authors that they must fulfill their side of the bargain. In addition to submitting their manuscripts in timely fashion, authors should take steps to safeguard their identities as well. “The writers that don’t want to give their name to the public should be the first to hide them,” he explained, “but I have noticed that many frequently go to the printshops, talk about their paper, they see it, they re-read it, they correct it, they might even be at the time of its sale in the same bookstore, where they take account of the profits it made them, publicly and without the least hesitation.” Such flagrant behavior made it obvious to many who the real authors behind anonymous works were—even before these works had been printed. Instead, Lizardi suggested authors stay quiet, have the printshop send their proofs.

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104 Ibid., 161. “bajo el especioso pretesto de que tienen que hacer, de que otras cosas les producen mas, ni de que el papel les parece duro”

105 Ibid., fols. 161-162. “Los escritores que no quieran dar su nombre al público, deben ser los primeros que lo oculten, pues he advertido que muchos con continuación van a las imprentas, hablan de su papel, lo ven, lo releen, lo corrijen, acaso estan al tiempo de su venta en la misma libreria, en donde también hacen la cuenta de las utilidades que les produjo, públicamente y sin la menor reserva.”
directly to authors’ homes where they could correct them in secret, thus avoiding potential disasters in the first place.

Lizardi’s article offered a roadmap for how printers and authors should collaborate under the new order of freedom of the press. Through his prescriptions, Lizardi endeavored to clearly delineate the boundaries of print production, which required both spatial and social demarcations. While authors should work privately in their houses and resist the urge to hang out in the printshop and bookstores gossiping about their latest anonymous work, printers and shop workers should keep quiet and do their job, not divulging any information about the products they produced, nor interfering in the arbitration of what items deserved to make it into print or not.

Lizardi’s vision of a rationalized world of print production was a pipe dream, as the author himself admitted when he wrote his own article of complaint in an early September issue of *El Conductor Eléctrico*. The printing of the newspaper was threatened, he explained, “because the administrator of the printing press of don Mariano Ontiveros does not want to continue printing it, without more reason than because HE DOESN’T WANT TO or because HIS MASTER DOESN’T WANT TO.”¹⁰⁶ Lizardi had run into the same dilemma faced by Torres Palacios, but in the printshop of Zúñiga y Ontiveros. The only reason given by the administrator for refusing to print Lizardi’s newspaper was that the printshop was saturated with work. “As if in said printshop there

¹⁰⁶ “Aviso al público sobre despotismo de imprentas,” *El conductor eléctrico*, no. 22 (1820). “porque el administrador de la imprenta de don Mariano Ontiveros no quiere continuar imprimiéndolo, sin más razón que porque NO QUIERE o porque NO QUIERE SU AMO”
were but one case of type, one typesetter and one press,” scoffed Lizardi, “and I handed in two signatures a day, so that my newspaper would occupy all the type, presses and journeymen.”

Lizardi suspected other motives were at work, however. “Could it be because I demand that they produce my copies in a timely fashion? Could it be because I have returned, although not demanded payment for, various torn, dirty and trodden signatures?” Putting his finger on the real reason, Lizardi addressed printers directly, “Or could it be because I put a Certain Communiqué about a printshop” and suddenly fell afoul of “all the exceptions, arbitrariness, etc, that all of us have evidence you know how to commit when you want to.” Here, Lizardi suggested that the Ontiveros printshop had colluded with Valdés—the subject of the communiqué written by Torres Palacios—to shut Lizardi out of the writing market.

If Lizardi had worked to define a role for the public writer, he expressed frustration that printers did not share his same public spirit. “Printers are by definition public persons,” he argued, “destined to serve the public that fattens them, especially in Mexico, where by virtue of being three, they are all rich.” They should serve customers “without deference or preference,” just as bakers sell bread on a first-come-first-served basis. Lizardi also emphasized that public writers—in particular, journalists—deserved

107 Ibid. “como si en la dicha imprenta no hubiera sino una caja de letra, un cajista y una prensa, y yo diera dos pliegos diarios, de suerte que ocupara mi periódico toda la letra, prensas y oficiales.”
108 Ibid. “los impresores son personas públicas de oficio, destinadas a servir al público que los engrosa, especialmente en México, donde por ser tres, son todos ricos.”
109 Ibid. “sin deferencia ni acepción”
to be appreciated more highly, even more than writers of loose pamphlets, for their regular commitment to informing the public. Signing off with the promise of legal action, Lizardi assured printers that the law would win out over their moneyed interests.

His efforts seem to have been in vain, for a month later Lizardi published a pamphlet in a Puebla printshop complaining that he had indeed been locked out of Mexico City’s print economy. Just as insurgents had launched propaganda aimed at Mexico City from outside the capital, so did Lizardi launch his attack on the city’s printers from a safe distance. Entitled *Rociada de el Pensador a sus débiles rivales* (roughly, *The Pensador Showers on his Weak Rivals*), the pamphlet’s main text responded to other published critiques of Lizardi’s writing and publishing practices. In one instance, Lizardi defended himself against the accusation that his periodicals failed to appear at promised regular intervals due to the author’s constant disputes with his printers. A lengthy footnote continued the conversation by explaining that two of Mexico City’s three printers refused to take his business (the third, a personal friend, was simply too busy). Here, Lizardi reiterated his complaints against Valdés and Ontiveros, accusing the former of usury and the latter of laziness in living up to Lizardi’s quality standards. While Lizardi requested that seals be printed on his works “to avoid fraud and theft,” he could not convince the printer to comply. As a result, Lizardi had discovered his works sold around the city in incomplete sections, and at different prices. While the author wished to develop standards for printed works, he could not impose his vision on

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111 Also discussed in Vogeley, "Las vicisitudes editoriales de "La Quijotita y su prima"," 143.
Mexico City’s printers. In the meantime, at least Puebla printers—“more generous than my compatriots”—welcomed would-be authors with open arms.\textsuperscript{112}

**Insubordinate Reprints and the Perils of Free Expression**

Printed, as they were, on October 5, Lizardi’s Puebla pamphlet may have nodded to an unfolding political development whose locus was the very same Puebla printshop. In the first days of October 1820, a broadside attracted the attentions of Mexico City’s *Junta de Censura* (censorship review board), which had been recently re-formed under the new 1820 constitution.\textsuperscript{113} Printed in Puebla on September 27, the one-sided document, entitled *El liberal a los bajos escritores* (The Liberal to Base Writers,) accused Mexico’s “slavish writers” of “prostituting your pens in clumsy adulation” to the Viceroy Apodaca.\textsuperscript{114} The author, signing under the initials F.M., went on to criticize his commanding officer and the viceroy himself for failing to implement the provisions of the new Constitution, stating that “in America the Constitution is only enjoyed as a theory,” and arguing that the establishment of Ayuntamientos and local elections represented mere tokens of genuine constitutional enactment.\textsuperscript{115} The critical document had, according to its imprint, been produced in Puebla’s Government Printshop.

\textsuperscript{112} Fernández de Lizardi, *Obras, X - Folletos (1811-1820)*, 330. “más generosos que mis compatricios”\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{1}}}

\textsuperscript{113} The *Junta* was convoked in July of 1820. Archivo Histórico del Distrito Federal, Ayuntamiento, Justicia, Jurados de Imprenta, vol. 2739, exp. 2.


\textsuperscript{115} F.M., *El liberal a los bajos escritores*. “en America solo se disfruta la teoria de la Constitucion.”
The broadside arrived in Mexico City within the week, where it was seen by the city’s *Fiscal de Imprenta*, an officer appointed under press laws to review local printed matter and identify potential press violations. The fiscal, José Ignacio Espinosa, submitted the broadside to the Junta de Censura for review on October 4. To do so, Espinosa sent the broadside along with an explanation to one of its members, the *Juez de Letras* Juan Gómez de Navarrete for processing. Espinosa suspected that the broadside represented a “slanderous libel” of the type laid out in article four of the new freedom of the press laws. “If this paper is not amongst those about which that article speaks,” he reasoned, “the Fiscal does not understand what others might exist that demand with greater justice the voice of his office.”

Using the press legislation as a guide, the Fiscal exhorted Gómez de Navarrete to investigate the broadside’s production, confiscate any copies he could find, and “demand that the subject who administers or represents the voice in that printshop of the [Puebla] government tells who the editor of said paper is.”

Thinking more practically about how to stop the text from circulating further, the fiscal urged Gómez de Navarrete to immediately send notice to Mexico City’s printshops, warning them not to re-print the controversial item. Although such a move seemed to represent a violation of the principle of freedom of the press—especially because the item

116 AGN, Instituciones Coloniales, Indiferente de Guerra, vol 290A. “Sumaria contra el teniente Felix Merino por libelo titulado ‘El liberal a los bajos escritores,” 1820. fol. 47. “Si este papel no es de los que habla aquel primer articulo, no entiende el fiscal que pueda haber otros que con mas justicia reclamen la voz de su ministerio”

117 Ibid., fol. 47 verso. “para que exija del sujeto que administra o lleve la voz en aquella imprenta del gobierno diga quien es el editor de dicho papel”

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had not yet been deemed to be in violation by the censorship board—the fiscal couched his logic in another statue of the press laws. “It would be enough to warn [printers],” reasoned Espinosa, “that said writing is a property which no one can take advantage of without the license of the author as disposed by the Cortes and published here by edict.” Espinosa thus invoked intellectual property statutes—also laid out in 1820 legislation—as a counterbalance to freedom of the press.

Espinosa’s letter revealed that officials were still working out how to proceed with the enactment of press laws on the ground. The fact that the fiscal developed a legal justification for enacting a roundabout form of censorship supports this idea. The phenomenon of re-printing—a practice that flourished as Mexico City printshops re-issued ephemeral materials received in limited quantities from Spain and other parts of the country—clearly preoccupied the fiscal, who worried that *El liberal a los bajos escritores* would soon find a larger audience in Mexico City. Yet re-printing received no special mention as a phenomenon with political implications in the Spanish legislation, which explains Espinosa’s creative invocation of intellectual property laws, which he deployed not as an author protecting property, but to give officials leeway to stop the spread of imprints.

Indeed, re-printing challenged officials’ capacity to put the lid on the developing controversy with the tools afforded by press laws. Espinosa’s suggestion came too late. The same day, Juez de Letras Juan Gómez de Navarrete forwarded the Fiscal’s letter to

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118 Ibid., fol. 47. “Bastaría advertir que dicho escrito es una propiedad de que nadie puede aprovecharse sin licencia del autor según lo dispuesto por las Cortes y publicado aquí por Bando.”
the censorship board along with another copy of the broadside text: it had just been reprinted in pamphlet form in Mexico City, at the printshop of Alejandro Valdés. Urging haste, the judge exhorted the junta to issue its ruling within the next two days.\textsuperscript{119} The following day, the Junta de Censura condemned the broadside as an “infamous and calumnious libel” against the viceroy.\textsuperscript{120}

Acting as the executing judge, Gómez de Navarrete ordered the confiscation of any available imprints, and sent his court scribe, Procopio Guazo, to investigate the offending item’s production at Valdés’s printshop within the next twenty-four hours.\textsuperscript{121} Gómez de Navarrete also called for a full investigation of the imprint’s production and dissemination, instructing his scribe not only to canvas Valdés for the print run and names of any buyers or subscribers, but also to ask the same questions in all the city’s “stands or stores where it is known papers are sold.”\textsuperscript{122} In addition, he ordered the prohibition on the broadside be printed up in the newspaper and placed on notice boards, warning any possessors to hand in their copies within three days.

When the scribe Guazo arrived at Alejandro Valdés’s home later that day, the printer shooed him away. Due to official business with the Mexico City Ayuntamiento, Valdés explained, he was “ignorant of the governance of his establishment.”\textsuperscript{123} Valdés, who had been elected to the city council after the Constitution’s restoration—the scribe

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., fol. 47 verso.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid. “libelo infamatorio y calumnioso al Exo. Sr. Virrey de este Reino.”
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., fol. 48 verso.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., fol. 48 verso. “puestos o tiendas que se sepá se expenden papeles.”
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., fol. 49. “desentendido del gobierno de su casa.”
knew this and described Valdés as a “Caballero Regidor,” or Sir Councilman in his notes—had turned over management of his shop to his administrator, José María Jimeno.124

Proceeding next to the printshop located just off the central zócalo, Guazo questioned the administrator José María Jimeno, whom he encountered there. Jimeno showed the scribe the three existing copies of the broadside on hand, explaining that the individual who ordered the re-printing had done so various times, to the extent that the printshop had produced two thousand copies. These copies had then been distributed to all the city’s vendors, although Jimeno did not know how many had been distributed to each. When asked what individual was responsible for ordering the re-prints, Jimeno showed Guazo a copy of his printer’s log, where he confirmed the signature of Don Manuel Galán, a lieutenant from Tres Villas, who was staying with one Don José Mariano on Donceles street, nearby in the city center. The scribe next proceeded around the corner to the city’s bookselling stalls in the Portal de Mercaderes, which, he explained for the record, was “where public papers are sold,” in search of the offending broadside. His inquiries turned up only one large cache of imprints—thirteen and a half dozen copies in the stand of José María Rincón Rocha—and a paltry six copies in the store operated by Lizardi.125

124 The city council had been restored without opposition from the viceroy, and had overseen elections to the Cortes in which “creole autonomists swept the field.” The cabildo itself had published a document promising to enact the constitution in due time, but explaining that long-standing abuses could not be fixed overnight. Anna, The Fall of the Royal Government in Mexico City, 195.
125 In 1820, Fernández de Lizardi apparently made good on his plans for a reading room where individuals could pay a subscription to read all the latest imprints. Although his broadside “Rociada de el Pensador” intimated his business was going nowhere thanks to lack of a market, it apparently operated long enough
Once the presiding judge had learned the identity and military affiliation of the individual behind the broadside’s reprinting, he rescinded the case to a military judge, the *Auditor de Guerra*, who wrote to the viceroy laying out a plan of action for Galán’s imprisonment and the continued round-up of imprints in the capital city. Galán, the auditor explained, would not have the right to contest the broadside’s censorship because the work fell under the category of injurious, which had been specially earmarked in an 1813 addendum to the press laws as not eligible for appeal.\footnote{AGN, Instituciones Coloniales, Indiferente de Guerra, vol. 290A, fol. 51. Oddly, a copy of the 1813 addition to the 1810 press legislation, published in the *Diario de México* ends with article 26, although the Auditor particularly cites article 28. “Nuevo decreto adicional sobre la libertad de imprenta,” *Diario de México*, October 8 and 9, 1813. Cited in Delgado Carranco, *Libertad de imprenta, política y educación*, 79.} While the viceroy approved the auditor’s plans, he informed him that Manuel Galán had already been imprisoned in the *Ciudadela* (citadel) by his own order.

Meanwhile, the remaining hundreds of broadsides circulated throughout the city, out of official reach. A supporter of the viceroy and former propagandist, the priest Manuel Toral, confiscated fifteen copies in the nearby town of Amecameca on October 6 “without violence, to impede their circulation,” from a youth who was selling them in his parish.\footnote{AGN, Instituciones Coloniales, Indiferente de Guerra, vol. 290A, fol. 51. “sin violencia para impedir su circulación.”} Submitting these copies to the viceroy, he explained “I was informed that the purpose was to disseminate them to *tierra caliente* (the inland insurgent stronghold) and

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the fact that even paying their cost they didn’t want to sell all of them to me proves it.”

Invoking the danger of the imprints as weapons that might fuel the insurgency, Toral acted on his own authority by confiscating the broadsides even before news of their official condemnation would have reached the town, located some sixty kilometers from Mexico City. While it is not specified if Toral had seized copies of the original Puebla documents or the Mexico City re-prints, it was clear that the imprints were on the move.

Back in Mexico City, events unfolded quickly that alerted a broader public to the official outlook on the controversial broadside. For one, a flurry of pamphlets issued counter positions to those advanced in *El Liberal a los bajos escritores*. They had already begun to emerge on October 6, in the form of a refutation composed by Mariano Barazábal and printed in the shop of Valdés himself. Valdés used his privileged status to dispel the rumors that likely were already swirling around the pamphlet. Rather than issue a stand-alone statement, Valdés attached a rhyming epigram and message to the end of Barazábal’s pamphlet, *Mordaza al liberal que se dice*, titled “The printer to the respectable public:”

> He who attacks virtue  
> With such crazed daring  
> Has no understanding  
> Neither of it, nor of APODACA.

Quien á la virtud ataca

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128 AGN, Instituciones Coloniales, Indiferente de Guerra, vol. 290A, fol. 51 verso. “se me informó que el fin era extenderlos hasta por la tierra caliente, y lo prueba el que pagando su importe no querían vendermelos todos.”

129 Barazábal, a poet, had contributed a number of fables to the *Diario de México* published by Carlos María de Bustamante. Eladio Cortés, *Dictionary of Mexican Literature* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 72.; Martínez Luna, *Estudio e índice onomástico del Diario de México, primera época, 1805-1812*, XXXVII.
con tan loco atrevimiento,
no tiene conocimiento
ni de ella, ni de APODACA.\textsuperscript{130}

“The insolent paper printed in Puebla, and reprinted in my house,” explained Valdés, “is worthy of the fire.”\textsuperscript{131} Justifying his actions, Valdés argued that “It is well known to all Mexico City that I do not manage my office,” and thus remained unaware of the broadside’s content.\textsuperscript{132} His administrator, similarly, was so busy that he did not stop the presses, having only followed legal protocol by collecting the editor’s signature.

Having explained his actions, Valdés re-established his position vis-à-vis the authorities. On the one hand, he expressed his honor at serving as an alderman of the Ayuntamiento and affirmed the “constitutional spirit that animates me.”\textsuperscript{133} On the other, he outlined a relationship of rational respect for the Viceroy. “I neither have, thanks to God, reason to flatter the Most Excellent Sr. Viceroy, nor do I, being reasonably well-off in possessions of fortune, aspire to anything.”\textsuperscript{134} Nevertheless, he offered “eye witness to the honor and goodness of his heart.”\textsuperscript{135}

Valdés’s poetic addition offers vivid proof of the uncertainty of his position as a printer under the new press laws. As a member of the Ayuntamiento, he publicly upheld constitutional principles. Yet as a printer with ties to the viceregal administration, he had

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\begin{enumerate}
\item Mariano Barazábal, \textit{Mordaza al liberal que se dice} (Mexico City: Alejandro Valdés, en su oficina, calle de Sto. Domingo, 1820), 4.
\item Ibid. “El papel insolente impreso en Puebla, y reimpreso en mi casa, es digno del fuego.”
\item Ibid. “A todo Méjico es notorio que yo no manejo mi oficina.”
\item Ibid. “del espíritu constitucional que me anima.”
\item Ibid. “No tengo, a Dios gracias, por que adular al Exmo. Sr. Virey, pues razonablemente acomodado en bienes de fortuna, tampoco aspiro a nada.”
\item Ibid. “testigo ocular al honradez y bondad de su corazón.”
\end{enumerate}
no interest in accusing the Viceroy of violating the constitution, as the controversial broadside had done. In practice, furthermore, Valdés had already revealed his willingness to refuse to publish certain texts—an action that might well have extended to judging their contents—as his pamphlet printed earlier that year attested. The admission of the controversial broadside, it seemed, had been a mistake, which Valdés rushed to smooth over.

His embarrassment surely grew the following day, Saturday, October 7, when officials released a supplement to the government gazette (printed in the office of Juan Bautista de Arizpe), which reproduced judge Gómez de Navarrete’s orders to confiscate the broadsides and investigate their printing in Valdés’s printshop.\textsuperscript{136} By now, Mexico City’s elite and reading public would be well aware that Valdés had played a role in the release of controversial materials, but the nature of this role remained unclear, as the gazette did not mention the results of the investigation that had turned up Manuel Galán as the perpetrator.

Galán, meanwhile, had been brought from his cell to Valdés’s printshop, where the administrator, José María Jimeno, presented him with the accounting books that carried his signature. Returned to prison after confirming his identity, Galán wrote his own self-defense, which he sent to be printed in the newly established office of J.M. de Benavente y Socios in pamphlet form.\textsuperscript{137} In it, Galán recounted the tale of woe that led

\textsuperscript{136} Suplemento a la Gazeta del Gobierno de México, October 7, 1820.

\textsuperscript{137} Manuel Galán, Prisión en la ciudadela del teniente Galan (Mexico City: Imprenta de D. J. M. de Benavente y Socios, 1820).
him to reprint the controversial broadside. Far from an ideological decision, Galán told his fellow “countrymen and Spanish Americans” that poverty had forced his hand. Having been imprisoned when insurgent leader Martín Javier Mina captured San Luis de la Paz (in Guanajuato), Galán was eventually processed by the viceregal government after Mina’s defeat. Accused not only of having failed to defend San Luis de la Paz but also of having collaborated with the enemy, Galán found his salary reduced to a third.138

As he searched for ways to ameliorate his poverty, Galán explained, “amongst the many [options] that presented themselves to me was freedom of the press.” He attempted to “print, or reprint papers,” one of which happened to be the *Liberal a los bajos Escritores.* “It is true that it contains scandalous propositions against our worthy Viceroy,” he admitted, “but I decided to benefit by this means, so that they should arrive to his notice, so that, summoning me, I might make him see up close the state of my misery, and the delay in the dispatch of my suit, which is what causes it.”139 Switching his address from his fellow citizens to the Viceroy himself, Galán offered an apology: “Yes, your Excellency, my intention was not nor has been, to denigrate your irreproachable conduct, but rather to resolve my woes,” by expediting justice under the Royal Order of the Cortes.140

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138 Ibid., 2.
139 Ibid., 3. “El es verdad que contiene proposiciones escandalosas contra nuestro benemerito Virey, pero me propuse lucrar por este medio, y que llegasen a su noticia, para que llamándome, le hiciese ver de cerca el estado de mi miseria, y la demora del despacho de mi causa, que es quien la ocasiona.”
140 Ibid. “Sí, Sr. Escmo, mi animo no fué ni ha sido, denigrar la conducta irrepreensible de V.E. sino el remediar mis males”
Galán’s petition—which simultaneously addressed a broad public and the Viceroy himself—forwarded two arguments: that poverty had led him to publish a controversial pamphlet in order to earn money, but also that poverty had led him provoke official action in order to gain attention to his ongoing legal case, which had stalled out. The second argument—which may have been fabricated after the fact to explain away an embarrassing imprisonment—suggested that the enforcement of press laws, while intended to uphold official standing, might potentially be turned against officials in ways that could bring further criticism to light. Had he not been imprisoned, perhaps Galán would have found no public to hear his tale of woe, which he presented in a pamphlet befittingly printed with well-worn type.

Within several days, news of the government’s ban had reached Puebla, and was re-printed in the shop of Pedro de la Rosa.141 Puebla officials, meanwhile, received instruction to commence their own parallel investigation into the broadside, and turned up the lieutenant Felix Merino of the Regimente Fijo, as the F.M. responsible for the broadside. Like Galán, Merino was a member of the military—and son of the intendant of Valladolid, a high-ranking colonial official—and his case was passed over to an Auditor, who requested a copy of the new freedom of the press laws, having not had the opportunity to consult one previously.142 Merino, it turned out, was already imprisoned

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on charges of insubordination in the fort of Loreto, in the hills north of Puebla, but—like
Galán—was brought down to the printshop of the government to identify his signature.
The printshop administrator, Juan Francisco Palacios, brought out a copy of the broadside
bearing Merino’s signature. For legal proceedings, the act of claiming responsibility and,
in this case, authorship over a controversial imprint occurred at its place of production:
the printshop, where a notary transcribed the act of recognition, memorialized as an
official ceremony. In Merino’s case, a lieutenant colonel, the prisoner, the printshop
administrator, and the notary all bore witness to the act, although a cast of printshop
characters surely stood by in the background.

Investigations into Merino’s trial paralleled a flurry of pamphlets published over
the following weeks, with titles like *Sobre el papel de Puebla El Liberal a los bajos
escritores; El americano sincero en defensa del Exmo. Virey, Conde de Venadito ofendido
en el papel titulado, El liberal a los bajos escritores; Otro liberal a los bajos escritores;
El tercer liberal a los bajos escritores; Ataque con el silencio a todo enemigo de la
imprenta libre;* and *Mordaza al liberal que se dice.* These pamphlets addressed broader
questions of authority and the implementation of the Cádiz constitution through analysis
of Merino’s words and actions: *El Liberal* had become the central node of debate. Even
Lizardi weighed in more directly with a pamphlet that both chided Merino for violating

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Marta Terán and José Antonio Serrano Ortega (Mexico City: Colegio de Michoacán / Universidad
143 The titles translate roughly as *On the Puebla Paper ‘El Liberal a los bajos escritores;’ The Sincere
American in Defense of the Most Excellent Viceroy, Count of Venadito, offended by the Paper titled ‘El
liberal a los bajos escritores;’ Another Liberal to Base Writers; The Third Liberal to Base Writers; Attack
with Silence all Enemies of the Free Press;* and *A Gag for the So-called Liberal.*
the constitution through his insubordination and recognized some of the pamphleteer’s points regarding the constitution’s uneven application.\textsuperscript{144} As the investigation developed, the Viceroy ordered Puebla officials to collect any broadsides they could find. After visiting the government printshop, however, they learned from administrator Juan Francisco Palacios that all six hundred copies had already been sold.\textsuperscript{145} Within the week, Puebla officials announced that they had posted nineteen printed notices that advised local residents of the ban and ordered owners to turn over their copies.\textsuperscript{146} While several residents complied with the order, the news seemed only to fan the flames. Puebla residents showed their support for Merino’s position in writing and other direct actions. A confiscated copy of the broadside, for instance, bore a hand-written addendum addressed to the Viceroy: “Poor you, \textit{tata} (daddy), resign because they’re taking it from you soon enough. \textit{A Dios}.”\textsuperscript{147} The intendant of Puebla, Ciriaco de Llano, expressed consternation over a steady stream of visitors to the fort. “The gathering of people of all classes that went with frequency to visit Lieutenant Don Felix Merino in his arrest at the fortification of Loreto,” he worried, “could compromise public tranquility, because both those that visited him and the masses (\textit{vulgo}) could through an erroneous belief persuade themselves that his imprisonment springs from persecution for being a defender of the constitution.”\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{144} Reyes Heroles, \textit{El liberalismo mexicano: los orígenes}, 1, 48.
\textsuperscript{145} AGN, Instituciones Coloniales, Indiferente de Guerra, vol. 290A, fol. 58 verso. (October 9, 1820).
\textsuperscript{146} For list, see ibid., fol. 59.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., fol. 57 verso. “Pobre de tata, renuncia por que te quitan pero brevecito. A Dios.”
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., fol. 72. “la reunión de gentes de todas clases que iban con frecuencia a visitar en su arresto de la fortificación del Loreto al Tente. D. Felix Merino, podría comprometer la tranquilidad pública respecto a
Merino’s developing case revealed how the act of printing might intertwine with other insubordinate actions to disrupt military discipline and, in the eyes of officials, threaten the very fabric of the social order. Merino, for his part, was unapologetic and seemed to revel in the opportunity to speak his mind during questioning. Perhaps being the son of a prominent official known for loyalty to the crown emboldened the young officer. In testimony taken in late November, he contested the official action of adding the censorship charge to his ongoing case. He claimed his paper was “founded in public opinion,” and used the opportunity to directly challenge the viceroy, asking “if you really loved [the constitution], why didn’t you promulgate it sooner?”

Merino, detailing his information on the arrival of ships bearing printed news of the constitution’s reinstatement and various other decrees, questioned the viceroy’s willingness to follow orders from Spain. As proof, he launched into a laundry list of violations—including the imprisonment of Rafael Dávila for the publication of his pamphlet, La verdad, aunque amarga, pero es preciso decirla—that proved his critique to be justified. Merino, denying all charges that he had committed defamation, brazenly argued that the viceroy lacked public virtue.

que tanto los que le visitaban, como el vulgo, podían por una errada creencia persuadirse de que su prisión dimanaba de persecución por defensor de la constitución.”

149 Ibid., fol. 67 verso. “pues si en realidad la amase, ¿por que no la juró antes?”

150 The questioner called Merino to task for insulting the viceroy by calling him a “despot” and mocking him as Virtuous Apodaca with italicized type. Merino denied the charge by explaining that his characterization was well founded, and by claiming that the use of italics actually represented a response to other authors—a marker of an ongoing dialogue in print—who had previously deployed the formula. Ibid., fol. 71.
Officials prepared reports that further discredited Merino’s arguments—as if more evidence were necessary after his testimonial tirade. One official advised the viceroy that Merino’s act of printing while imprisoned meant that the imprint was necessarily part of his broader crimes of insubordination. Not only had he committed a crime by insulting his commanding officer in print, he had dared to publish at all while already behind bars. The proof of insubordination was self-evident, and the dangers were significant. “If a subaltern,” the fiscal assigned to the case reasoned, “dares so brazenly not only to disobey the Supreme Authority, the Captain General, the Viceroy, but also to insult them openly in public papers, what can other authorities and Military Chiefs expect from their subordinates?”

In December, the War Council met in Mexico City to decide Merino’s fate. The following day its members unanimously found him guilty. One of the voting judges, colonel Angel Díaz del Castillo, described Merino as lacking “the respect and subordination the Laws establish for good order, without which society would be endangered by anarchy.” The council sentenced Merino to be shipped off to Spain, where he would be imprisoned for four months in a castle until he moderated his stance. Merino’s case revealed that officials had reason to worry about freedom of the press—especially if would-be writers circumvented Mexico City’s printshops. If printers were

151 Ibid., fol. 73. Opinion of Fiscal José Ignacio Ortíz de Rosas. “si un subalterno se atreve tan descaradamente no solo a desobedecer a la Sa. Autoridad, al Capitan Gral, al Vice-Rey, sino a insultarle abiertamente en papeles públicos, ¿qué podrán esperar las demás autoridades y Gifes Militares de sus subordinados?”

152 Ibid., fol. 76 verso. “respeto y subordinación que establecen las Leyes para el buen orden, sin el cual la sociedad peligraría en la anarquía”

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willing to do the job, critical imprints could indeed enter circulation, where they openly questioned viceregal authority. Even the most trustworthy printer, Alejandro Valdés, could not be relied upon as a full partner, and the speed of print’s dissemination seemed to outpace officials’ first attempts to reckon with the new legal system.

Such incidents cast doubt—from the perspective of officials—on the nature of their longstanding relationship to Mexico City’s printers. Looking back, conservative historian Lucas Alamán assigned a fair amount of power to the pamphlets that circulated in the fall of 1820. “The pamphlets that each day were published in use of freedom of the press,” he argued, “contributed much to augment this agitation of spirits, with the strangest titles and in which, in the style best suited to make an impression on the masses, incited them to revolution.”

Merino’s case did seem to elicit a response not only from writers with the means to publish rebuttals, but also from a broader swath of society who expressed their support through actions that troubled military officials in Puebla. A conjuncture of forces, however—rather than the heroic triumph of critical imprints—made efforts to recalibrate viceregal policy towards print moot. Merino himself seems to have never embarked for Spain to serve his sentence, as the viceregal government collapsed several months later. Agustín de Iturbide, himself a colonel in the royal army, enacted his own form of insubordination by defecting and, allied with insurgent leaders,

153 Alamán, Histórias de Méjico, IV, 41. Alamán blamed the Junta de Censura, which he believed was composed of individuals, appointed by the Cortes, who harbored liberal sympathies. The case of Merino suggests junta members would support the viceroyalty. “Contribuían mucho a aumentar esta agitación de los espíritus, los folletos que cada día se publicaban en uso de la libertad de imprenta, con los títulos más extraños y en los cuales, en el estilo mas propio para hacer impresión en el pueblo, se le excitaba á la revolución….” Also quoted in Reyes Heroles, El liberalismo mexicano: los orígenes, 1, 39.
brokered Mexico’s independence. Alejandro Valdés, who had allowed Merino’s message to gain a broader audience by failing to oversee his shop’s activities, stepped easily into the role of Iturbide’s Imperial Printer.

**Conclusion: a Medium and its Makers in Flux**

By the time Alejandro Valdés found himself open to public mockery in the 1822 broadside that called attention to his usurious manipulation of the printed page, the printer had realigned his patronage relationships to serve the imperial government of Agustín de Iturbide. Government upheaval brought new scrutiny, as well as opportunities and losses to Mexico City’s well-connected printers, who re-calibrated the terms of their relationship to a new manifestation of official power. Mariano Zúñiga y Ontiveros, accustomed to enjoying the exclusive privilege for printing the *Guía de forasteros* since his father had started the practice in the 1760s, learned through the grapevine that Valdés would be printing the 1822 edition with official sanction. He appealed to the imperial government, claiming that the sudden change had provoked everyone to believe Ontiveros had done something wrong, or had been “hostile to the cause of my Fatherland’s freedom.”

Speaking to a changing context in which old privileges could not be enforced, Ontiveros explained, “it is not my intent to infer an indisputable right of justice be maintained in the possession of this printing; but I do demand the consideration

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154 AGN, Gobernación, sin sección, caja 10 (old numbering system), exp. 1, “Indiferente,” fol. 193 “por desafacto a la causa de la libertad de mi Patria”
due to a humble servant” with a long and regular service record. Ontiveros did not succeed at changing officials’ minds (they accused him of being remiss in his duties), and Valdés picked up additional duties in the coming months, participating in projects ranging from the design of new imperial heraldry to the printing of paper treasury notes.

Other actors enjoyed mixed results after the fall of the royal government. Individuals who had supported insurgent forces with their printing skills returned to Mexico City in search of payment and patronage. In 1822, José Antonio Alcalde y Uribe (he also signed Uribe y Alcalde) wrote to officials in the imperial government asking for back pay. As his supervisor, the former director of Iturbide’s portable army press Rafael Nuñez attested, Alcalde had walked for fourteen days to Querétaro, where he offered his services as a typesetter to the army in July of 1821. By mid September, just days before Iturbide’s triumphant entrance into Mexico City, officials were wrapping up

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155 Ibid. “No por eso intento deducir un derecho incontestable de justicia para ser mantenido en la posesión de esta impresión; pero sí reclamo la consideración que se tiene un criado de escalera abajo para no despedirle sin causa cuando ha servido aunque no sea bien, sino regularmente.”

156 On the design of the imperial shield and critiques of the heraldry, as well as copies of several engraved options, see Benson Library, Hernández y Dávalos Collection, HD 16-8.3677, January 30, 1822 and HD 16-1.3140. Valdés seems to have participated in a short-lived project for producing paper money. His press issued an anonymous pamphlet in favor of paper notes in 1823. El papel moneda se quita, (Mexico City: En la Imprenta Imperial de Sr. D. Alexandro Valdés, 1823). On the failed paper money project, see José Antonio Báñez Vázquez and José Enrique Covarrubias, La moneda en México, 1750-1920 (Mexico City: Instituto Mora / El Colegio de Michoacán / El Colegio de México / Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, UNAM, 1998), 189-191.

157 AGN, Gobernación, sin sección, caja 25 (consecutive number 30), exp. 41, fols. 1-4. Alcalde was contracted at 25 pesos a month.

158 Although I have not located information for Alcalde y Uribe’s prior work experience, he seems to have had a relative, José Uribe, who worked as the administrator for Juan Bautista de Arizpe. The exact identity of these characters is difficult to pinpoint, as Nuñez at one point refers to Antonio as José Antonio, and Antonio represented himself in the same letter as Alcalde y Uribe and Uribe y Alcalde. The two signatures are different, suggesting there were two individuals with similar names—perhaps father and son? See receipts signed in AGN, Indiferente Virreinal, Real Audiencia, caja 3937, exp 13.
and had stopped worker pay, upon which Alcalde journeyed back to Mexico City.\textsuperscript{159}

While the emperor approved Alcalde’s request for a half-month’s back pay, neither Alcalde nor Nuñez seem to have capitalized on their work for Iturbide’s forces, perhaps because his imperial government was soon replaced by a republic.\textsuperscript{160} Instead, former insurgent printers joined the ranks of an expanding cast of printers who, freed from royal licensing requirements, established small-scale businesses in Mexico City.

Mexico City’s printing scene was changing in ways that challenged colonial-era assumptions about the nature and uses of print. While legal shifts had expanded the possibilities for using print, political and material realities transformed in uneven ways, as the case of Lizardi and Valdés revealed. The world of production had evolved from one in which a handful of actors maintained well-known connections to officials, to another populated by a mixture of old and new characters, whose allegiances were no longer transparent. Furthermore, the on-the-ground realities of freedom of the press legislation were far from stable, as the case of Félix Merino’s pamphlet suggested. An era of uncertainty regarding print production had begun, enveloping both printers and their patrons.

\textsuperscript{159} AGN, Gobernación, sin sección, caja 25 (consecutive number 30), exp. 41, fols. 1-4. Uribe explained the payments had been stopped when a better equipped press in Tepozótlan was commandeered. In any case, the army was on the move to take Mexico City.

\textsuperscript{160} Alcalde falls out of the archival record, although his relative José enjoyed a lively career in the 1820s and 1830s political printing scene. Nuñez also involved himself in political printing. He purchased a printing press in 1829 (and again in 1837) but was unable to fulfill monthly payments. Archivo Histórico de Notarias, #155 Francisco Calapiz y Aguilar, March 9, 1829.
Lizardi captured this climate of uncertainty in an 1822 pamphlet, *Maldita sea la libertad de imprenta*, (Freedom of the Press Be Damned).\(^1\) Prior censorship, his dialogue between Don Liberato and Don Servilio suggested, was being replaced by subsequent censorship or, punishment after the fact. Because writers could never be sure how their imprints might be judged under the new legal regime, Don Liberato preferred not to use the term “freedom of the press, but rather danger of the press.”\(^2\) As the following chapter explores, not just writers, but also printers, would have to navigate the newly-politicized terrain of print production in the early republic.

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\(^1\) José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, *Maldita sea la libertad de imprenta* (Mexico City: Oficina de Betancourt, 1820).
\(^2\) Ibid., 11. “*libertad de imprenta, sino peligro de imprenta*”
Chapter 2. Juggling Responsibility: Political Persecution and the Printer’s Public Personae

Outcry erupted from Mexico City’s political elite in October of 1840, when the Yucatecan senator José María Gutiérrez Estrada published an incendiary pamphlet calling for the establishment in Mexico of a monarchy ruled by a foreign prince. ¹ Although a Mexican republic had been established nearly two decades before, the specific shape of the nation’s political system remained a major point of contestation—one that had engaged not only elites but also popular groups and the military in spirited, often violent confrontations. ² As an element in this ongoing contest, the pamphlet concretized the circulating opinion that republican politics were leading nowhere, and represented an early public expression of ideological conservatism’s support for monarchism. ³

Gutiérrez Estrada’s text responded directly to events of July 15, 1840, when federalists led by José Urrea and Valentín Gómez Farías attempted a coup on Anastasio Bustamante’s centralist government. ⁴ Although the coup dissolved once rebels learned that General Antonio López de Santa Anna had mobilized to quash the revolt, the fighting that had erupted in the heart of Mexico City shook the political class, bearing out

¹ José María Gutiérrez Estrada, *Carta dirigida al Esmo. Sr. Presidente de la República, sobre la necesidad de buscar en una convención el posible remedio de los males que aquejan á la República; y opiniones del autor acerca del mismo asunto* (Mexico City: Impresa por I. Cumplido, 1840).
² On popular politics in early republican Mexico City, see Warren, *Vagrants and Citizens*; Arrom, “Popular Politics in Mexico City.”

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their fears of chaos brought about by radical politics. Disillusioned by the event, Gutiérrez Estrada offered an alternative proposal to calm Mexico’s political strife. Yet his search for a sympathetic public was met instead by widespread condemnation: observer Fanny Calderón de la Barca noted that the pamphlet “seems likely to cause a greater sensation in Mexico than the discovery of the gunpowder plot in England.” As the outcry mounted, Gutiérrez fled into exile in Europe. The three print world insiders who had published the pamphlet—the printer Ignacio Cumplido, the former printer Martín Rivera, and the editor Francisco Berrospe—on the other hand, were immediately caught and thrown into prison.

Beyond its importance as a major episode in the evolving political contests that marked the nation’s first decades (Gutiérrez spent decades advocating the monarchist cause in Europe, which he achieved in 1863 as a leader of the delegation that offered the Mexican throne to the soon-to-be-emperor Maximilian), the incident made public the behind-the-scenes role played by Mexico City printers on the national stage. In doing so, it highlighted the contingent nature of the key concepts of authorship and responsibility for texts. Who was really to blame for the incendiary pamphlet? Although seemingly a straightforward answer, given that the senator’s name appeared prominently on the title page, the question in fact provoked heated public debate and lengthy legal proceedings that sought to pin responsibility for the pamphlet on the agents who had facilitated its production.

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5 Ibid., 163.
6 Quoted in Hale, Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 27.
The incident also highlighted the ways in which the emerging state struggled to define and enforce rules—which balanced the principle of freedom of the press against its perceived abuses—to govern print production. After two decades of independence, government’s duty to regulate print production (to uphold freedom of the press legislation) coexisted with its ministers’ desire to silence political opponents by wielding the law against enemies. As a result, authors, printers, and other intermediary actors developed creative schemes to issue controversial texts and denounce government persecution. Run-ins between these actors and the government revealed, however, that regulation was not a one-way street, but rather an issue of contestation where print producers exploited situational identities and legal concepts to challenge state actions and craft public personae as important political actors.

This chapter explores how Mexico City printers interpreted, worked with, and contested legal and extralegal regulation that governed print production during the first half of the nineteenth century. A project to establish a government printshop represented an important symbolic and practical action as the new national government developed its own information apparatus that, like the colonial regime’s, used printed materials as a tool and symbol of governance. Yet this project would be short lived and officials reverted to a contract system akin to the old colonial licensing regime within five years, a move that further destabilized the city’s networks of print production. The chapter then focuses on the Gutiérrez Estrada case and ensuing media firestorm to understand in greater specificity how printers contested regulation by manipulating the contingent nature of responsibility and constructing arguments that shirked responsibility altogether.
Although the incident did not provoke new press legislation, it did herald the consolidation—first disseminated on a broad scale by Ignacio Cumplido—of the printer as a crusading public figure, one who played dual discourses of manual and intellectual labors against each other in a bid for influence in Mexico’s world of politics and intellectual production.

*Imposing Order, Circumventing the Rules: City Printers Navigate Government Regulation*

After independence, officials took immediate steps to secure the nascent government’s information apparatus. A month after the emperor Iturbide’s ouster in 1823, Mexican officials heralded a new phase of printing with the foundation of the National Printshop of the Supreme Government of Mexico inside the National Palace. Joaquin de Miramón, a veteran cavalry captain who had, with his brother, established one of the first new printshops in Mexico City after freedom of the press had been declared in 1820, became its first director. To better oversee the press operations, he took up residence in a palace room that had been previously occupied by Iturbide’s private kitchen.

Although the establishment of Mexico’s National Printshop represented a clear symbolic expression of national sovereignty, Miramón’s regular reports reveal that difficulties challenged the government’s plans from the outset. Half of the shop’s type

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7 As a Capitán veterano de caballería—presumably on the side of insurgents—Miramón received a pension of 92 pesos a month, but in 1823 worked as director of the printshop without receiving additional payment. AGN, Gobernación, sin sección, caja 59/1 (consecutive # 87), exp. 28, fols. 1-2 “Imprenta Nacional del S.G. de M, Cuenta general de diferentes gastos”

8 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 81, exp. 4, unnamed sub-folder, fol. 2, “Numeros de Gacetas desde el 21 al 30 de Abril de 1823.”
had been pied—jumbled into an unusable heap—and needed to be laboriously sorted out. The various rooms of the shop, located on the ground floor, lacked windowpanes and thus were subject to constant theft of supplies and imprints. With many integral pieces of equipment missing, a carpenter enjoyed a steady stream of work. Yet over the course of the year, as he proudly demonstrated in a printed report presented to superiors, Miramón improved the shop’s ad hoc conditions. Two new printing presses were acquired from the United States through the merchant contacts of the Minister of Finance, bringing the total number of hand presses to nine. Miramón divided print work into two divisions, one serving congress, the other the executive branch. Each division had a staff of typesetters and apprentices working in two composition rooms, and a number of tiradores (press operators) and tintadores (inkers) making imprints in two pressrooms. Quarters were tight, and bookbinders responsible for folding and stitching newspapers and pamphlets had to carry out their labor in the street, presumably in full view of city residents.

While the establishment of the national printshop reduced the need to rely on old guard printers like Valdés for producing official documents, the shop did not isolate itself from Mexico City’s broader printing networks. On the one hand, the government shop took on job work for private individuals and religious institutions to make extra money,
printing such undignified items as marriage announcements, labels for wine and liquor bottles, and even a pamphlet advertising the benefits of *agua de la colonia* (cologne). On the other hand, it sometimes relied on other printshops when the workload became overwhelming. Over the course of 1824, Miramón outsourced printing to at least six local printshops. Especially when the production of the 1824 federal constitution caused a backlog starting in October, workers carried heavy forms of composed type through the city streets to nearby shops for printing. In one instance, type for an issue of the government gazette had to be painstakingly picked up from the streets and re-composed after being dropped by a servant en route to the Imprenta de Alva.

While employees developed a shaky information apparatus in the national palace, a succession of government officials and legislators struggled to rein in an ever-increasing circulation of printed materials, many of which engaged politics by denouncing officials with indignity or satire, offering up counter arguments or launching revolutionary plans (pronunciamientos). Freedom of the press, based on 1820 Spanish

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12 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 60, exp. 9; Gobernación, sin sección, caja 59-7, exp. 23, fol. 157.
13 AGN, Imprenta del Gobierno, vol. 1-2, unpaginated, January-December 1824. Offices included Alva, Juan Cabrera, the Imprenta de la Calle de Capuchinas, de la Calle de Tacuba (Valdés’s shop), de las Escalerillas (Benavente).
14 Individual letters of type were composed and arranged within an iron frame, or *rama*, and locked into position (creating the form) before being lifted and set down on the bed of the press for printing. The printing of the federalist constitution is detailed in AGN, Imprenta del Gobierno, vol 2. The printshop produced both standard and luxury editions of the document.
15 AGN, Imprenta del Gobierno, vol 2, unpaginated, “Cuenta de lo trabajado en el departamento de composición del S.P.E. del Domingo 5 al sabado 11 de Dic.re de 1824.”
16 This increase owed both to an influx in imported print materials, as well as gradual increases in domestic production, most importantly in the realm of newspapers and political papers and pamphlets. See Rosalba Cruz Soto, "Los periódicos del primer periodo de vida independiente (1821-1836)," in *La república de las letras: asomos a la cultura escrita del México decimonónico*, ed. Belem Clark de Lara and Elisa Speckman (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005), 60-61. For an overview of early efforts to regulate these materials, see Alejandra Sánchez Archundia, "Legislación de Imprenta y voceo de papeles..."
law and re-issued in independent Mexico in December of 1821, guaranteed the individual’s right to publish as long as texts did not conspire against the state or its religion, incite rebellion, legal disobedience or disturb public peace, violate “buenas costumbres,” or commit libel against an individual’s private honor or reputation. It also established the basic rules for denouncing and judging abuses before a jury, which remained more or less in effect until 1882. Convicted violators could face multi-year prison sentences, although these sentences were often commuted.

By 1840, early divisions between proto-political parties organized around the York and Scottish Rite Masonic Lodges had evolved into “visibly fragmented [...] conservative, moderate, and radical factions,” that tangled over the form and role of the emerging state (the 1824 constitution was rewritten in 1835, ending the first Federalist Republic with the installation of a Centralist Republic that governed until 1846), including how it should legislate freedom of the press. Even before the installation of the more conservative Centralist Republic, however, the broadness of legal language defining abuses of freedom of the press enabled officials to take first steps to denounce


17 Colección de los decretos y ordenes de las Cortes de España, que se reputan vigentes en la república de los Estados-Unidos Mexicanos, (Mexico City: Imprenta de Galvan á cargo de Mariano Arévalo, 1829), 152-153. The right to publish religious material, however, remained under church oversight, as the following chapter explores.

18 For a succinct summary of the pendulum swings in press legislation in the early republic, see Piccato, The Tyranny of Opinion, 36-40.

texts critical of government, especially on charges of sedition. Officials were not always successful in making charges stick, however, so governments modified the nation’s press laws multiple times over the decades, as Pablo Piccato has succinctly analyzed, eliminating then reinstating juries, prohibiting the public crying, or *voceo* of news items, and requiring then abolishing printshop deposits against potential fines.

Legal changes, typically interpreted as evidence of unstable governments’ modification of the ideal of press freedom in favor of political principle or gain, are better understood as part of a broader set of efforts to control information, responding not only to political exigencies, but also to conditions unfolding in the streets of Mexico City. Such a perspective shifts our focus away from abstract legislation—where intention is clear but effectiveness less so—and towards the relationship between government officials and the city’s expanding networks of print production, which snaked through the streets north and west of the National Palace. Indeed, modifications to press laws frequently dealt with the human actors involved in making print in the capitol—newspaper vendors, printers, responsible parties, and other members of these circles. Between the ideal of press freedom and the desire to stifle political opposition lay a complex series of interactions involving authors, printers, booksellers, government

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20 Cases in the AGN’s Tribunal Superior de Justicia del Distrito Federal (TSJDF) reveal that even small newspaper paragraphs questioning government officials’ activities might earn denouncement for sedition. See, for example, AGN, TSJDF, 1827, caja 25 (box 2 of 1827 series), exp 68.
22 During the tumultuous decades of the early republic, legal changes often corresponded to political ideology with conservative administrations favoring tighter controls (although liberals also wielded press laws against enemies and foreign invasions prompted crack-downs).
ministers, judges, police and military officers, newspapers, pamphlets, broadsides, readers, and city dwellers.

In the eyes of officials—especially in the Ministry of the Interior, the agency in charge of keeping tabs on print production—the key to unraveling these interactions lay inside the city’s printshops, where critiques routinely emerged under their noses. Suspicious places, they were nevertheless a necessary evil: the struggling state depended upon them to produce the government gazette, laws, decrees, circulars, ministerial reports, tariff schedules, lottery tickets, papel sellado, military papers, passports, and other items. Adding to the problem, the national printshop proved to be financially unsustainable, and by the end of the 1820s, the shop was dismantled in favor of a contract system for official imprints. The government’s press was sold—at a discount—to the contracted printshop that would then issue the Government Gazette, the Imprenta del Aguila, administered by José Jimeno but owned by Luisa Cacho de Navarrete and her husband Juan Gómez de Navarrete, a lawyer active in politics (he served on the first Junta de Censura and twice as a supreme court judge) in 1828.

Although more cost effective, the contracting practice—which continued for four decades with occasional changes in contractors, as explained in chapter four—created the

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23 This ministry changed names several times: Ministerio de Relaciones Interiores y Exteriores, Ministerio de Gobernación.
24 Gómez de Navarrete was the same judge who had initiated the inquiry into Felix Merino’s controversial broadside, El liberal a los bajos escritores, in 1820. The press, valued at 4637 pesos 4 reales 10.5 granos by the printers Mariano Arévalo, José Uribe y Alcalde, and Miguel Bracho, was sold for 3091 pesos five reales 11 granos. While José Jimeno appears in many of the contractual documents, notarial records reveal that Cacho and Gómez Navarrete were the owners. Chapter 3 discusses their role in underwriting official materials in the face of financial crisis. Archivo Histórico de Notarias (AHN), #155 Francisco Calapiz, 19/7/28, fol. 873 and AGN, Gobernación, legajo 139, exp. 1.
need for more careful government oversight. No longer located safely within the palace walls, the printing press had become a part of the city’s production networks, and might be turned to unofficial purposes. The lack of control over the printing process engendered anxieties, bureaucratic spats, stacks of paperwork, the arrest of the government gazette’s own editor, and at least one scheme to cheat the state of revenue by duping the contracting printshop into publishing a pseudo-counterfeit government gazette.²⁵

City printers, for their part, suffered relentless official scrutiny—both legal and extralegal—for their activities. Although authors were permitted to publish anonymous texts, the law required the printshop to publish its name and location on every imprint and retain a signature—which bore the identity of the imprint’s “responsible party”—on file.²⁶ This requirement led local officials, in the case that someone denounced a text as defamatory or seditious, to the printshop where they would uncover the true author and reveal his identity to judge or jury.²⁷ Savvy to the system, printers initially used the names of criminals already serving jail time or hospital patients to mask authorial

²⁵ Complaints about printing inefficiencies, especially undelivered newspaper copies or tardy editions, are scattered throughout the records of the government gazette. See, for example, AGN, Gobernación, legajo 47, exp. 30; legajo 139, exp. 7. For an example of an 1832 bureaucratic spat between the postmaster and the printer of the government gazette, see AGN, Gobernación, legajo 140, exp. 3. In 1840, the editor of the Government Gazette Isidro Gondra found himself under house arrest after reprinting a blurb from a different newspaper that had been deemed subversive: AGN, Gobernación, legajo 39, exp. 1. Minister of the Interior Lucas Alamán caught an 1830 effort to divert government funds by publishing a semi-official newspaper at the contracting printshop, and essentially nationalized the paper to reclaim the cash: AGN, Gobernación, legajo 140, exp. 5.

²⁶ The practice of responsibility is laid out in Title V of the 1820 Spanish legislation: Colección de los decretos y ordenes de las Cortes de España, que se reputan vigentes en la república de los Estados-Unidos Mexicanos, 156.

²⁷ The routine visits to printshops are documented in all records from press jury cases located at the Archivo Historico del Distrito Federal’s (AHDF) Jurados de Imprenta section, and in the AGN’s TSJDF. For examples of how identities might be revealed, see AGN, TSJDF, 1827 (August), caja 25 (box 2 of 1827 series), exp. 70, 74.
identities, but this practice was banned in 1835, leading printers and authors to develop work-arounds that played with the legal category of the “responsible party.”

Occasionally, broadsides and pamphlets emerged with no identifying markers, prompting officials to call on select printers to act as typographical detectives in tracking down the offending printshop. The experts might canvas the city’s shops—visiting the storefronts of their friends and business rivals—and occasionally catching the culprit with jumbled type or incriminating ink on the presses’ tympans. Even the most sympathetic expert witnesses could not be wholly trusted to do the job, though, as some stonewalled the government with technical arguments, explaining that all the city’s printshops used the same types, making identification impossible.

Even when they followed protocol, however, printers constantly faced jail time, harassment, and occasionally bodily harm. Adding significantly to government suspicions, printers in the decades after independence were increasingly linked to the partisan newspapers that emerged from their shops. The artisanal nature of newspaper production meant that the responsibilities of editors, writers, and printers often overlapped, a fact that challenged legislators who struggled to impose categorical

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28 Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion*, 37. Before the practice was banned, individuals who signed their name presumably received some kind of payment for their services. For examples of the practice, see AHN, Tirso Rodríguez Loaria, #597, March 21 and 24, 1830; AGN, TSJDF, 1832 (May) caja 72 (box 5 of 1832 series), exp. 6; and TSJDF, 1832 (May) caja 72 (box 5 of 1832 series), exp. 52.

29 The tympan is a protective sheet layered between the printing paper and press, and often printed upon to ensure correct registration during the initial setup of the press or by accident. See, for example, the 1843 case against José Uribe, AGN, Gobernación, legajo 176, exp. 3, no. 16.

30 For example, in an 1836 case in which the government’s print contractor José Jimeno testified, the expert witnesses concurred that identification of an anonymous imprint would be impossible, “since today all use the same type and ink, and all comes from the United States.” AGN, Justicia, vol. 150, exp. 34.

31 The diaries of statesman Carlos María de Bustamante detail printshop sackings and violence. See, for example, entries on June 12, 1833; April 17, 1838. Bustamante, *Diario histórico de México, 1822-1848*. 134
definitions that could regulate the field. As a result, officials erred on the side of caution by hauling not just editors or writers but also printers, their printshop administrators, workers, and wives into jail for short-term stays, or by confiscating printing presses themselves.  

These tactics sought not only to force printers to take more conservative stances toward their publications, but also to encourage the formation of clear connections between authors and texts in an era when these relationships were murky. In spite of government efforts, however, the issue of responsibility—of signing one’s name and accepting legal responsibility for an imprint—remained a mechanism ripe for exploitation. Printers acted at least occasionally as fiadores, or guarantors, for responsible parties genuinely associated with the newspaper business, helping imprisoned editors get out on bail.  

In other instances, individuals who shared political views supported each other as financial backers against the eventuality that one might run afoul of the law. Financial support (whether it stayed within the printshop or reached out across the urban grid) could ameliorate the discomforts of jail time until political fortunes had shifted and ensured that presses rarely stopped completely. Printer networks, therefore, sought to manage the risk associated with publication and mitigate the effects of government efforts to assign blame to a single individual.

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32 Bustamante regularly reported on printer imprisonments within the panorama of local politics. See, for example, entries on August 14, 1828; October 30, 1833; October 29, 1838. Ibid.
33 See cases involving Mariano Monroy and Mariano Galvan Rivera, AGN, TSJDF, 1827 (May), caja 25 (box 2 of 1827 series), exps. 69 and 73. Also, the case involving Genaro Gutiérrez and Rafael Rafael, AGN, TSJDF, 1849 (December), caja 260 (box 3 of 1849 series), exp. SN.
34 For an example of one such relationship (between Manuel Gallo and Rafael Nuñez) compare AGN, Justicia, vol. 135, exp. 10 and AHN, Francisco de Madariaga #426, February 17, 1837, fols. 169-70.
Even with behind-the-scenes networks to draw on, printers sometimes landed in more serious trouble. In these instances, the Mexico City press, holding an obvious stake in the issue, commented—often with outrage—on the plight of imprisoned printers.\textsuperscript{35} While reports on printer jailings often formed around political poles, broader debates about freedom of the press also emerged intertwined with discussions of these specific incidents, in which government action often appeared to violate the spirit (if not always the letter) of the law.\textsuperscript{36} In private communiqués with judges and ministers, meanwhile, printers used less noble tactics to get out of jail.

One printer, Manuel Gallo, jailed in 1838 ostensibly for acting as the guarantor to another printer who had reneged on a debt, directly petitioned the president and, pleading poverty, explained, “I who am an unhappy printer, whose numerous family does not allow me to dispose of one single \textit{real}, would be ruined forever, if the two cases of type and one press, which are my only patrimony, are allowed to be embargoed.”\textsuperscript{37} Alluding to the political concerns that he suggested truly motivated his imprisonment, Gallo

\textsuperscript{35} For a sample of press coverage, see \textit{El Correo de la Federación}, July 27, 1827, 3 on Martín Rivera’s jailing; \textit{El Mosquito Mexicano}, December 16, 1834, 4 on Augustin Guiol’s imprisonment; \textit{El Mosquito Mexicano}, June 28, 1836 on the printer Torres’s banishment; \textit{El Cosmopolita}, July 28 1838 on Manuel Gallo’s jailing.

\textsuperscript{36} The city’s newspapers also discussed freedom of the press legislation—including specific regulations that targeted printers—in great detail. For example, see the article, “Can the printer who has fulfilled all the formalities prescribed by the laws and rules nevertheless be condemned as an accomplice of the writer?” (“El impresor que ha llenado todas las formalidades prescritas por las leyes y por los reglamentos de la imprenta, puede sin embargo ser condenado como cómplice del escritor?”) \textit{El Cosmopolita}, July 28, 1838, 3.

\textsuperscript{37} AGN, Justicia, vol. 135, exp. 10. Gallo also appears to have acted as a \textit{fíador} to the printer Rafael Nuñez, in spite of being underage, in 1837—a fact noted by the officiating notary. Perhaps this relationship involved remuneration. AHN, Francisco de Madariaga #426, February 17, 1837, fols. 169-70. “Yo que soy un infeliz impresor, cuya numerosa familia no me permite disponer de un solo real, me arruinaría para siempre, si dejase embarcar las dos cajas de letra y una prensa, que son mi único patrimonio.”
argued that he was the only printer in the city forced by poverty to publish the opposition federalist newspaper *El Mexicano*, and promised “I will not print any seditious paper, if your excellency liberates me from the need in which I find myself, and furthermore will put at your orders the paper I print under the title *Voto Nacional*, so that the supreme government may give it the sense that best suits the interests of the nation.”38 Jailed twice more within the year (having broken his promise in the midst of federalist demonstrations against Anastasio Bustamante’s second presidency), Gallo later tried to escape trouble by submitting an eloquent letter of support from a political patron, and finally successfully appealed for amnesty once the federalist coup had failed.39

Similarly imprisoned in the same year on convoluted suspicions of having printed texts critical of the government by the radical federalist José María Alpuche e Infante, the printer Luis Heredia decided to wait out the political storm. Heredia’s wife and several printshop employees had been briefly jailed and released when suspicion first fell on the printshop, but officials continued to keep tabs on Heredia as they investigated “broadsides that come to light being scattered in the streets or circulated through the mail.”40 Still suspicious of Heredia’s printshop a month later, the Ministry of the Interior

38 AGN, Justicia, vol. 135, exp. 10. “Yo no imprimiré papel alguno sedicioso, si vuestra excelencia me liberta de la necesidad de que me hallo, y además pondré a sus órdenes el papel que imprimo bajo el título de ‘Voto Nacional,’ para que el supremo gobierno le dé el giro que mejor convenga a los intereses de la patria.”
39 Gallo gained his freedom—after several petitions (including one from public writer Wenceslao Zuleta) had failed due to his own miscalculations and ongoing political upheaval—after the December, 1840 “Three-Day Ministry” ended with Bustamante’s defeat and amnesty of Federalist challengers.
40 AGN, Justicia, vol. 135, exp. 5. “los papeles volantes que se dan a luz ya esparciéndolos en las calles ya circulándolos por la estafeta.”
ordered his arrest, motivated by rumors that it was a source of subversive output.\textsuperscript{41} Although printshop experts exonerated Heredia’s shop after examining his collection of type, he remained in prison—apparently forgotten—as federalist agitation intensified.

Petitioning the Minister of the Interior in the final days of the federalist coup, he cast himself as a neutral party caught up inadvertently in politics, explaining that “I have found myself imprisoned for twenty-five days, [...] only for being owner of a printshop” that printed an unpopular item.\textsuperscript{42} Heredia gained freedom several days later.

\textit{The Gutiérrez Estrada Case: An Unpopular Pamphlet Makes a Big Splash}

Printers might respond differently when imprisoned, but their responses shared one feature: all denied personal responsibility for their alleged crimes. Even after two decades of on-and-off public and government debate over how to regulate press freedom, printshop responsibility remained a matter around which officials and printers negotiated.

As the chapter has explored, anonymity was a central challenge confronted by those in charge of regulation. But in the most notable episode of its kind, the Gutiérrez Estrada incident in 1840, confusion over printshop responsibility—over how to rein in print and punish offenders—occurred even when all knew the identity of the offending author.

The outcry erupted after the publication of Gutiérrez Estrada’s pamphlet—which called for a convention to overcome Mexico’s political impasse via the installation of a

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AGN, Justicia, vol. 135, exp. 9. This time, the offending pamphlets had been mailed under wraps to Oaxaca, where they had offended a general who returned them to the attention of the Minister of War in Mexico City.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
Ibid. “Hace veinte y cinco dias que me hallo preso [...] Mi prision ha sido unicamente por siendo dueño de una imprenta, se imprime en ella las Filipcas del Padre José María Alpuche.”
\end{flushright}
foreign prince as monarch—in October of 1840. Although hopeful for a sympathetic reception—historian Michael Costeloe suggests that monarchist sympathies were commonly expressed in private, and Gutiérrez Estrada had tested the waters with several letters in the newspaper—Gutiérrez Estrada acted cautiously in publishing his pro-monarchist pamphlet. Choosing the printshop of Ignacio Cumplido, at the time a contractor for the national government (he printed the government gazette), he nevertheless availed himself of the back channels of Mexico City’s print world to carry out the task, as subsequent inquiries revealed.

If the structure of the polemical text is any clue, the author anticipated a skeptical reception. Materially speaking, the item at first glance exemplified a genre that had taken hold since independence: the political pamphlet, which featured a colorful paper wrapper that revealed an orderly, typographically hodgepodge title page. With printers now purchasing type from new sources, especially the United States, title pages took on a look that blended the linear regularity of the neoclassical page with sometimes whimsical juxtapositions of typefaces. This style, which bore a strong resemblance to imprints produced at the same time in France, showed off the printshop’s range of offerings, but by the 1840s had developed into its own recognizable genre. (Figure 10) The specific arrangements of this particular pamphlet’s paratextual elements, nevertheless, gives clues that both author and publisher proceeded with care.43

43 Theorist Gérard Genette has argued that title pages—one of many paratextual elements identified in his study—serve as a “threshold” that “enables a text to become a book” by mediating between object and audiences. Genette’s wide-ranging study is based primarily on European texts, he emphasizes that
An epigraph below the author’s name features a quotation from Tacitus, the Roman historian posthumously interpreted as a shrewd analyzer of power and politics, drawing a parallel (for the most educated readers) with Gutiérrez Estrada’s own project of critique. The publishing information (pie de imprenta), meanwhile, reads “Printed by Ignacio Cumplido,” a particular formula that clearly states what Cumplido’s role in the process entailed. Other pies de imprenta produced by Cumplido in 1840 offered quite differing formulations: “Printed by the proprietor,” “Printshop of the author,” “Printshop of I. Cumplido overseen by L. J. Valdés,” or simply “I. Cumplido” all appeared on various imprints. These formulations sometimes referenced other paratextual elements, especially the title but also editors’ introductions, and changed with the degree of authority discursively assumed by the printer over a particular text and how he posited his identity within the printshop. In the case of Gutiérrez Estrada’s pamphlet, while the senator cast himself as a latter-day Tacitus, Cumplido defined himself clearly as a printer, even suggesting literally that he had physically produced the imprint.

In the text itself, Gutiérrez Estrada laid out his case for monarchy in an extremely measured progression. Easing into the argument with a study in comparative government and an enumeration of the failures of Mexico’s federal and central republics, the author underscored his emotional appeal with a lone illustration (a luxury feature uncommon in political pamphlets, and developed specifically by the printshop for the text) of the National Palace after its damage in the fighting of the failed July, 1840 federalist revolt. (Figure 11). In the desolate scene, the palace’s bombarded facade crumbles into the
foreground, as the nation’s flag hangs limp and dejected in the background. Playing to the emotions of political elites shaken by violence, Gutiérrez Estrada hoped to sway a disillusioned public to his cause.

![Figure 11: Lithograph illustrating the damaged National Palace from Gutiérrez Estrada’s pamphlet.](image)

Published on October 18 with a print run of 2,000 copies, Gutiérrez Estrada’s princely plan instead garnered near universal condemnation from politicians and the press.\(^{44}\) The Chamber of Deputies denounced the work two days later, issuing a resolution asking the Ministry of the Interior to investigate the matter immediately.\(^{45}\) Before widespread outrage emerged in the press, the Ministry of the Interior initiated

\(^{44}\) Costeloe, *The Central Republic in Mexico*, 171. He did receive some support from *La Hesperia*, which Costeloe notes was the “mouthpiece of the Spanish Community,” and from *El Correo de los Dos Mundos*, the Franco-Mexican paper.

\(^{45}\) *Diario del Gobierno*, October 21, 1840.
action against the pamphlet’s publisher.\footnote{AGN, Archivo de Guerra, vol. 766, exp. s/n.} Following procedure, the pamphlet quickly found its way to the desk of a presidentially-appointed judge, in this case the Juez de Letras José Gabriel Gómez de la Peña, who unsurprisingly deemed it “subversive and seditious in the first degree, tending to incite disobedience against the constituted authorities.”\footnote{Ibid., 1 “subversivo y sedicioso en primer grado y que tiende a solicitar a la desobedencia de las autoridades constituidas.”} But even before the judge issued his communiqué, officials had investigated the matter by paying a visit to Ignacio Cumplido’s printshop, where they had inquired about the identity of the party responsible for the pamphlet. Although the pamphlet was clearly authored by Senator Gutiérrez Estrada—his name appears on the title page and at the end of a dedicatory letter addressed to President Bustamante—the signature on file at Cumplido’s printshop revealed a different name: Francisco Berrospe. By the morning of October 21, Berrospe had been rounded up and brought to Cumplido’s printshop, where he confirmed that the signature on file was indeed his.\footnote{Ignacio Cumplido, Manifestación al público del impresor ciudadano Ignacio Cumplido, con motivo de su prisión, verificada el 21 de octubre de 1840 (Mexico City: Imprenta de Cumplido, 1840), footnote, 3-4.} By nightfall, officials returned to arrest Cumplido himself, bringing him to the prison of the Ex-Acordada. Over the course of the day, Berrospe and another printer, Martín Rivera, had also been placed under arrest.

**Insider Dealings: Publishing Politically Sensitive Materials**

The legal file accompanying the Gutiérrez Estrada affair reveals that the monarchist pamphlet came into being not through the sole actions of Gutiérrez Estrada-
as-author, but rather through his interactions with this trio of printing-world characters: Cumplido, an up-and-coming liberal printer who, in 1840 also enjoyed the distinction of being the government’s official contractor; Rivera, a conservative printer who, in the 1820s collaborated with statesman Lucas Alamán as the printer of the newspaper El Sol; and Berrospe, the editor of one of the longest running Mexico City newspapers, the procentralist El Mosquito Mexicano. Berrospe and Rivera, two decades older than Cumplido (they were 49, Cumplido, 29 at the time of the affair), were veterans of early republican print politics and had collaborated previously: both had been arrested (Berrospe in 1827 and Rivera in 1833), and Rivera had been exiled internally.\(^{49}\) When Gutiérrez Estrada judged that senatorial immunity would not help him and went into hiding, Cumplido, Berrospe, and Rivera were rounded up, jailed, and subjected to questioning about the pamphlet. By choosing flight over principles, Gutiérrez Estrada left his collaborators to defend themselves in his stead. Their defense offers a glimpse into a series of publishing practices and printer relationships that not only crossed political lines, but also navigated and challenged the legal mechanisms that sought to clarify print responsibility.

The pamphlet’s author, meanwhile, remained at large, and early reports rumored that he had already fled to avoid capture.\(^{50}\) In the following days of press coverage, these

\(^{49}\) In 1827, Berrospe had acted as the responsible party for Rivera’s paper El Sol, and was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for a brief paragraph questioning government action regarding a dubious payment transfer. AGN, TSJDF 1827 (October), caja 25 (box 2 of 1827 series), exp. 68. On Rivera’s imprisonment, also described above in footnote 13, see Chávez Lomelí, Lo público y lo privado, 100.

\(^{50}\) El Cosmopolita, October 21, 1840, 4.
rumors were repeated, along with the news that officials were trying to “apprehend the printer,” even as Gutiérrez Estrada seemed to have vanished from the capitol.51 Anticipating the ordeal that would befall the arrested men, *El Cosmopolita* asked, “Should the *responsible party* be punished as a slanderer?”52 The article’s questioning reference to this narrowly-defined term—specifically, the individual who had signed the printshop paperwork, thus assuming legal responsibility for the published text—suggested that, beyond the specific case, consensus over the legal mechanism’s validity did not exist.

Following the arrests of Cumplido, Berrospe and Rivera, coverage of the Gutiérrez Estrada affair developed in the press while, out of sight and for a time out of the press (except in rumors), the three men began to confront legal difficulties. The day after their arrests, all three underwent questioning. As army captains, both Berrospe and Rivera enjoyed the privilege of the military’s legal exemption or *fuero* and were placed under the jurisdiction of its courts, overseen by the *Auditor* (Judge Advocate) José Manuel Zozaya. Being a civilian, Cumplido underwent questioning by the judge Gómez de la Peña, who had initially overseen the denunciation of the pamphlet. Although Cumplido’s case proceedings have not been located, much of his testimony is recorded in transcriptions added to Berrospe and Rivera’s file, an over-two hundred page document.

51 Ibid. “Se asegura que se trata de prender al impresor”
52 Ibid. My emphasis. “El responsable, deberá ser castigado como calumniador?”

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compiled with notarial case notes, official correspondence, and transcribed interrogations.53

Dodging Responsibility: The Idealist, the Veteran, and the Mechanic

During questioning, editor Francisco Berrospe described his involvement with the subversive pamphlet as a matter of unhappy chance. One day, he explained, he had gone to visit his friend Martin Rivera, who told him about a “very brilliant pamphlet” being composed by Gutiérrez Estrada.54 Knowing that Berrospe had lately criticized Mexico’s federalist and centralist systems in his newspaper El Mosquito Mexicano, “without effect,” Rivera had invited him to meet with the senator, presumably to discuss publishing his ideas in Berrospe’s paper.55 The two proceeded to Gutiérrez Estrada’s home, where the senator read passages from the manuscript, and explained that he wished to avoid possible challenges to his writings—even though he enjoyed senatorial immunity—by having another individual sign the responsibility slip. Berrospe signed the responsibility slip in good faith and he and Rivera left the house, at which point the latter informed Berrospe that Gutiérrez Estrada was disposed to give him “a decent gratification” as compensation for his services.56 Berrospe rejected the offer with

53 In this and most legal cases, notaries working for judges transcribed testimonies, usually in the third person. For a description of judicial notarial practices in Mexico, see Michael C. Scardaville, "Los procesos judiciales y la autoridad del estado: reflexiones en torno a la administración de la justicia criminal y la legitimidad en la ciudad de México, desde finales de la Colonial, hasta principios del México independiente," in Poder y legitimidad en México en el siglo XIX: instituciones y cultura política, ed. Brian F. Connaughton (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana / Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2003), 379-428.
54 AGN, Archivo de Guerra, vol. 766, exp. s/n, fol. 4.
55 Ibid., fol. 4. “sin resulta alguna.”
56 Ibid., fol. 6. “una decente gratificación.”
indignity and returned alone to Gutiérrez Estrada’s house to inform him that “if he had signed, it had not been mercenarily, but rather because he believed he did a service to his country.”57 Only later did Berrospe learn the true gist of the pamphlet’s contents—the senator had omitted the argument about inviting a foreign prince to govern Mexico in his recitation—which repulsed him, violating principles well known to the public.

Reporting that he “would rather have been killed than sign such a paper,” Berrospe presented himself as a man of principles: as the editor of a well-known newspaper, he claimed that his personal opinions had long been publically expressed in its pages, a consistent show of ideals that ultimately left him vulnerable to exploitation by the calculating senator. In his telling, Martín Rivera broached the topic precisely because he knew Berrospe’s politics aligned with those professed by Gutiérrez Estrada. This apparent confluence led Berrospe astray: excited to find a kindred critique of both the federalist and centralist systems in favor of a political regeneration for the national good, he had been duped into supporting a monarchist cause that he loathed. Gutiérrez Estrada, on the other hand, acted dishonorably by hiding the true nature of his arguments: true, he read from the pamphlet itself, but he had excerpted egregiously, using the text’s specifics to skew its general meaning. In Berrospe’s telling, Gutiérrez Estrada used his superior social standing—conveyed by the way he summoned Berrospe to an audience in his sumptuous home—to impress and was doubly dishonest by using Rivera to offer a payoff once the deal had been sealed, as if Berrospe were a hack for hire.

57 Ibid. “si había firmado, no era mercenariamente, sino porque creyó hacer un servicio a su país.”
Berrospe directed responsibility onto Gutiérrez Estrada, but also called Martín Rivera’s role into doubt. When questioned separately, Rivera confirmed many of the details offered by Berrospe. He had invited—or rather, he corrected himself—told Berrospe of Gutiérrez Estrada’s concurrent ideas, and the editor had expressed a wish to speak further with the senator on the matter. After the senator’s recitation—of a large portion of the manuscript, absent the foreign prince—Berrospe concurred with the senator’s call for a convention for the “political regeneration” of the nation.58 “Taking advantage of Berrospe’s good disposition,” the senator was moved to ask him to sign the responsibility slip, reasoning that he wanted a companion to help defend the imprint against possible contradictions.59 The manuscript was already printed, he explained, and only needed the signature to begin distribution. Berrospe then signed, but under the idea that the paper only touched on a political convention and not a foreign prince.

The auditor’s questions then turned to Rivera’s role in the case. Asked how he had found out about Gutiérrez Estrada’s notebook, he explained that on October 13, Ignacio Cumplido had called Rivera to his printshop. When he arrived, Rivera found Cumplido in the act of reading aloud from a sheet from the printed proof—dealing with the point of the political convention—as he corrected the typography. Cumplido conveyed that the author, Gutiérrez Estrada, wished to find a responsible party, a capable man who could defend his pamphlet if anyone contradicted it. While Rivera himself declined because “for some time he did not wish to get mixed up in public papers and

58 AGN, Archivo de Guerra, vol. 766, exp. s/n, fol. 10.
59 Ibid. “entonces el Sr. Gutiérrez aprovechando la buena disposición de Berrospe.”
thus had abandoned even his printshop,” he suggested Berrospe’s name, as he had read similar ideas in Berrospe’s El Mosquito, and agreed to broach the issue himself. The next day, when Rivera returned by appointment to Cumplido’s printshop, he encountered Gutiérrez Estrada, who repeated the printer’s proposal.

Rivera’s testimony crafted an image of a man who, while abreast of events, stayed on the sidelines of politics. Highlighting his retirement from printing, Rivera downplayed his own role as an active agent and long career of political involvement. He did not deny that he suggested Berrospe for the job of responsible party, but this was only because he kept up with politics by reading the city’s newspapers, and knew about Berrospe’s perspective. Plus, Ignacio Cumplido called him first, a fact that further displaced responsibility onto the pamphlet’s printer. Called to the printshop, Rivera discovered Cumplido in the compromising position of reading the pamphlet himself (and aloud so all in the vicinity could hear), even if this happened in the course of normal printshop duties. If Rivera and Berrospe both denied having full knowledge of the pamphlet’s contents, Rivera implied that Cumplido certainly had access to the full picture, and had acted in cahoots with Gutiérrez Estrada.

When the Auditor brought Rivera and Berrospe face-to-face to resolve the discrepancies in their testimonies, tensions between these long-time collaborators must have run high. How would punishment be meted out? Self-preservation won out over any good will or feelings of camaraderie that might have survived a night in jail. Each man

60 Ibid., fol. 11. “hacia tiempo que no quería mezclarse en nada de papeles públicos y aun por eso hasta su Imprenta tenia abandonada.”
stuck to his story on the most important issue, accusing the other of having taken the initiative to arrange the meeting between Berrospe and Gutiérrez Estrada. While neither took steps to outright denounce the other, the testimony suggests that the social and professional ties that had facilitated the production of the pamphlet had frayed in the aftermath of scandal.

While Berrospe and Rivera argued before a military hearing, Cumplido faced the questioning of the judge Gómez de la Peña—the man who had first deemed the pamphlet subversive—in a civilian procedure. Unlike the defensive positions staked by Berrospe and Rivera, Cumplido took a combative stance. Asked to confirm that he had printed the pamphlet, Cumplido assented, adding perhaps impudently, “because he believed that freedom of the press existed as expressed in the decrees that regulate it.” The printer then corrected the judge’s line of questioning on typographic procedure aimed at clarifying responsibility. When Gómez de la Peña asked if Cumplido had corrected the form himself, Cumplido gave a lesson in printshop protocol: printshop workers had composed the form (the physical layout of lead characters, or planta), and the author had corrected the proof (the printed sheet whose impression was taken from the form, or prueba), as was customary in all similar cases. Cumplido denied knowledge of the pamphlet’s full contents, explaining that he had read fragments of the senator’s manuscript as he sent them in piecemeal, but left the final revision in the care of his

61 Ibid., fol. 79. “porque creía que había libertad de imprenta conforme se expresa en los decretos que la reglamenta.”
workers.\textsuperscript{62} Asked to name these workers, Cumplido refused, stating he was “disposed that any punishment they might merit should fall upon his person, if, as he said before, freedom of the press does not exist.”\textsuperscript{63} Pressed again, the printer stood firm, saying he “does not wish that the injustice committed in his imprisonment should be suffered by people who in this case are as innocent as he.”\textsuperscript{64}

The questioning then turned to issues of responsibility. Cumplido carefully delineated his role as a printer when he admitted that he had, in fact, had some knowledge of the pamphlet’s contents, which he looked upon with disgust. When Gutiérrez Estrada had, “separating him from the role of mechanic,” asked Cumplido for his opinion, the printer had frankly disagreed with his proposed solutions.\textsuperscript{65} Berrospe was, Cumplido asserted, legally responsible for the imprint (as his signature on file proved), but only the pamphlet’s author had written and edited the text. Gutiérrez Estrada, Cumplido explained, was “responsible for the moral part” of the work, a fact he could prove with a letter, written by the senator, which exculpated Cumplido from any responsibility.\textsuperscript{66} But this step shouldn’t be necessary, Cumplido argued, as he had already produced the responsibility slip and, he had heard from others, Berrospe had already confirmed his responsibility anyway. In short, Berrospe’s testimony had already proved the illegality of Cumplido’s imprisonment (again, on the condition that freedom of the press did exist)

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., fols. 79-80.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., fol. 80. “el está dispuesto a que carga sobre su persona el castigo que aquellos merecieran, si como ha dicho antes no hay libertad de imprenta.”
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid. “no quiere que la injusticia que se cometa en su prisión la sufran personas que en el caso son tan inocentes cómo es él.”
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid. “separándolo del caso del mecánico.”
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., fol. 82. “responsable de la parte moral del repetido impreso.”
and vindicated the printshop of all responsibility in the matter. A follow-up questioning session probed the nature of Rivera’s role in the matter: Cumplido explained that he had nothing to do with the issue, but that Gutiérrez Estrada himself had requested that Rivera be summoned to discuss business.

Unlike his unlucky companions, Cumplido produced remarkably idealistic testimony. Although he similarly deflected responsibility away from himself and onto the other parties involved, he differed dramatically by exhibiting both defiance and insolence to an authority figure, invoking the right of freedom of the press three times in a way that questioned the judge’s own willingness to adhere to the legal system. Cumplido’s testimony is virtually devoid of honor talk, a vocabulary commonly used by nineteenth-century Mexicans to denounce and defend in legal and public fora, especially print.67 While he mentioned his personal and nationalistic repugnance for Gutiérrez Estrada’s ideas, he carefully drew boundaries between his participation as a printer and the content of the productions that emerge from his printshop. While not claiming to be a thoughtless being, he did characterize his role as printer as an apolitical one: he had opinions, but only expressed them when Gutiérrez Estrada pulled him out from his role as “mechanic,” to solicit them. Cumplido defined this mechanical role as the one properly assigned to the printer: opining on the productions of others went above and beyond the job description.

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67 A substantial body of literature on honor in Mexico (and Latin America) has explored its changing meanings and uses—including its class and gendered dimensions—from the colonial period through the transformation to republican systems and its entrenchment in daily life. For a succinct summary, see Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion*, 10-15.
By correcting the judge on printshop terminology, referencing his careful adherence to press legislation, and explaining the customary practices of printshop production, Cumplido established his expertise in his “mechanical” domain—where he labored under customary practices and the direction of outside patrons. Yet drawing the lines of responsibility was a tricky proposal: Cumplido could not deny that his employees were appraised of fragments (or more) of the textual content of the senator’s pamphlet, which they would have learned as they set its type. The judge was clearly interested in who possessed prior knowledge of the pamphlet’s contents: such individuals might be considered accomplices in his eyes. By highlighting the piecemeal nature of print production, Cumplido hoped to convince the judge that no one had a clear idea of the pamphlet’s contents. Of course, shop gossip virtually ensured that, even if no one had such knowledge from a simple read-through, everyone would have had an idea of the pamphlet’s gist in advance. Yet the judge dropped his questioning in the face of Cumplido’s protection of his workers’ identities: Cumplido’s printshop authority stood, at least regarding his workers.

**Cumplido’s Many Printers**

Gutiérrez Estrada’s pamphlet had been announced with large promotional broadsides, presumably printed by Cumplido and posted around the city on October 18, but after scandal broke days later the object became a must-read for the city’s political elite.68 Political observer Carlos María de Bustamante remarked in his diary that the

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68 *El Cosmopolita*. October 24, 1840, 4.
pamphlet “has caused a great sensation as much among those who have read it, as among those who have heard it spoken about.”69 While the government gazette published the strongest denunciations, conservative papers cast the senator’s ideas as misguided, rather than outright treasonous, and El Mosquito Mexicano, Berrospe’s paper, called for moderation.70 Opposition newspapers, especially El Cosmopolita, used the unfolding events to critique the government’s handling of the situation, focusing on the plight of the imprisoned men and a likely violation of press laws.71 Bustamante, writing three diary entries in one day as the scandal unfolded, expressed skepticism that Gutiérrez Estrada would ever be punished for the pamphlet even though it had obviously been “printed in fraudem legis.”72 He further speculated that French conspirators and powerful local conservative backers must have put Berrospe up to the task, “otherwise he wouldn’t have spent 2,500 pesos for the printing of this notebook.”73

A week later, El Mosquito Mexicano declared that the pamphlet remained “the sole issue of the day.”74 If reports are to be believed, Mexico City audiences were not satisfied with the brief excerpts that had been reprinted in several newspapers: to buy the

69 October 21, 1840. Bustamante, Diario histórico de México, 1822-1848. “ha causado gran sensación así en los que lo han leído, como en los que han oído hablar de él.”
70 The scandal generated condemnatory letters from General Santa Anna (El Diario del Gobierno, October 23, 1840, 2-3), Presidente Bustamante (El Mosquito Mexicano, October 27, 1840 and El Cosmopolita, October 28, 1840), General Gabriel Valencia (El Cosmopolita, October 28, 1840), General José María Torneel and others, and calls for investigation by the legislature (El Diario del Gobierno, October 21 and 23, 1840). El Correo de Dos Mundos suggested Gutiérrez Estrada was a good man led astray but well-intentioned: October 24, 1840. El Mosquito Mexicano argued that government action might be over zealous: October 30 and November 3, 1840.
71 El Cosmopolita, October 21, 24, 28, November 4, 14, 18, 1840.
72 October 21, 1840. Bustamante, Diario histórico de México, 1822-1848.
73 Ibid. “de lo contrario no gastaría dos mil quinientos pesos en la impresión de este cuaderno.”
74 El Mosquito Mexicano October 30 1840, 3. “el único punto del día”

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original item cost upwards of ten pesos, and just to read someone else’s copy cost one peso, a sum equal to a full month’s subscription to the bi-weekly Mosquito Mexicano.\footnote{El Mosquito Mexicano October 30 1840, 3. Comparatively, one peso represented several days of unskilled labor pay.}

Seeking out the copies that had made it into circulation—either through two city bookstores or, more likely, the distribution efforts spearheaded by its author—brought curious city dwellers together as they sought a way to get their hands on the controversial item.\footnote{AGN, Gobernación, Archivo de Guerra, vol. 766, exp s/n, fols. 82-83. Although testimony does not reveal whether the government confiscated any of the two thousand printed copies from Cumplido’s shop, historical patterns make this an unlikely eventuality. In his testimony on October 22, Cumplido explained that, while Gutiérrez Estrada had taken most of the two thousand copies printed to distribute himself, Cumplido had distributed 300 copies to two booksellers. A second round of questioning on November 18 revealed that he had also sent an unspecified quantity (he claimed he could not remember) to the Puebla bookseller Manuel Buen Abad, on Gutiérrez Estrada’s orders, the same day that the advertisements for the pamphlet were posted around Mexico City.}

Although well-heeled and middling sectors could have purchased or borrowed their own copies to read, the scandal’s depth, combined with the scarcity of copies, suggests that a wider swath of the city would have encountered the debate, perhaps catching fragments of public readings or discussions in the streets or city’s workshops.

Press debates continued for weeks, and involved the full spectrum of local (and some regional) papers in the cross-referential style common in newspapers of the day.\footnote{Because newspapers regularly referenced the opinions presented in other newspapers, the event’s full coverage reads like a conversation that would only make total sense if one followed the threads of all of the city’s major newspapers. Many individuals likely kept abreast of politics by keeping tabs on multiple papers, but articles usually explained just enough so that readers would grasp the alleged political biases presented by a paper’s competitors, and thus understand the issue at the center of these webs of commentary.}

While the general consensus disavowed Gutiérrez Estrada’s monarchical ideas, however, none critiqued Cumplido’s role in facilitating their dissemination. El Cosmopolita,
instead, warned that his imprisonment heralded the death of press freedom.\textsuperscript{78} The editors of the government’s \textit{Diario Oficial}, however, denied accusations that the Minister of the Interior “had ordered the printer of the aforementioned pamphlet placed in prison,” arguing that he “has done nothing more than urge the said judge in the exact compliance with the laws concerned, without indicating any individual.”\textsuperscript{79}

Ignacio Cumplido did not sit quietly as his case became a lightning rod for debate over freedom of the press. Within a day of his imprisonment, perhaps while waiting to be questioned, the printer penned a communiqué—his \textit{Appeal to the Public}—that his own shop, now overseen by an assistant, printed in the form of a double-sided broadsheet.\textsuperscript{80} A week later, Cumplido weighed in on his case with a lengthy \textit{Manifesto}, dated October 31 and published in pamphlet form—quite similar to the monarchist pamphlet but adorned on the title page with a printed medallion of the allegorical figure of liberty—which expanded upon the \textit{Appeal}.\textsuperscript{81} (Figure 12) Days later, the newspaper \textit{El Cosmopolita} published yet another of the printer’s writings, a “Defense” as a special supplement to the issue, doubling its page count.\textsuperscript{82} \textit{El Mosquito Mexicano} immediately picked up the “Defense” in serial form, publishing it in five installments across its front page, with the

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{El Cosmopolita}, October 24, 1840, 4.
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Diario del Gobierno}, October 26, 1840, 4. “había mandado poner en prisión al impresor del mencionado folleto. [...] El Sr. ministro no ha hecho otra cosa que excitar al repetido juez para el exacto cumplimiento de las leyes en la materia, sin señalar persona alguna.”
\textsuperscript{80} Cumplido’s assistant, Leandro Valdés, normally oversaw the administration of the government gazette, \textit{El Diario del Gobierno}, which Cumplido’s printshop continued to publish even in the midst of the scandal.
\textsuperscript{81} Cumplido, \textit{Manifestación al público}.
\textsuperscript{82} “Defensa del impresor ciudadano Ignacio Cumplido, con motivo de su prision, verificada el 21 de octubre de 1840,” \textit{El Cosmopolita}, November 4, 1840.

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last fragment appearing in late November. Deploying pamphlets, broadsides, and newspapers, Cumplido had—from behind bars—achieved a multi-genre print firestorm, garnering perhaps the largest and most sustained share of the news ever occupied by a printer in Mexico’s history.

All of Cumplido’s arguments focused closely on the law. His first publication, the Appeal, excerpted key sections from the current press laws, highlighting the rules about responsibility. Narrating the circumstances of his arrest, Cumplido expressed shock that he was taken into custody. Given that he always “worked with complete compliance to the law,” Cumplido assumed he had nothing to fear. Imprisoned, the printer now publicly challenged the government on behalf of his profession: “I demand, as good faith requires, that if there is not freedom of the press, and the decrees that govern it are null, that it be made known, so that in the future those of us who have the honor to dedicate ourselves to the noble art of printing not be victims.” As in his testimony, Cumplido mentioned his disgust for Gutiérrez Estrada’s pamphlet, which he published, “because, as a printer, the laws authorize me to do so.”

83 *El Mosquito Mexicano*, November 6, 10, 13, 17, 20, 1840.
84 Ignacio Cumplido, *Apelación al público* (Mexico City: Imprenta de Cumplido, 1840). “En mi profesión he obrado con total arreglo a las leyes.”
85 Ibid. “Yo demando, por lo que se debe a la buena fè, que si no hay libertad de imprenta, y son nulos los decretos que rigen sobre lo particular, se manifieste así, para que en lo sucesivo no seamos víctimas los que tenemos la honra de dedicarnos al noble arte de la imprenta.”
86 Ibid. “Porque las leyes me autorizan para hacerlo como impresor”
If the *Appeal* established the argument that the government’s actions violated the law, Cumplido’s second pamphlet, the *Manifesto*, deepened and broadened the narrative. With more room to expand, Cumplido used his medium to establish a legalistic framework through which his plight should be understood: the text’s first paragraph is a transcription of the judicial order for the printer’s arrest, followed by a notarial confirmation that the printed text itself is faithful to the original written behind bars on October 31. (Figure 13) Cumplido converted the trappings of legality—all in the form of scribal writings—into typographic form. Here, he followed conventions—similar to those used in the printing of legal notices or denunciations in newspapers—that converted the material signs of authority into printed transcriptions (for example, legal notices
described their issuer’s original signatures with the word “rubric,” and letters submitted on franked paper spelled out the type of seal visible on the letterhead). References to standard legal proceedings sought to convince the reader of the text’s reliability, but they also posed a challenge to the conventions they appeared to uphold, particularly the authority embodied in notarial writing. Indeed, Cumplido undercut the weight of the judicial order with a simple typographic symbol—the asterisk—with which he questioned, in a footnote, the order of legal procedure that led to his arrest in the first place. Reproducing official writings in print, Cumplido contested government authority with typography.

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87 Manifestación al público, 3.
More brazenly, Cumplido had no scruples about challenging government action with words. His pamphlet immediately launched into a deconstruction of the judge’s actions, alleging them to be contrary to the “genuine sense” of the law, and critiquing the Ministry of the Interior for unjust imprisonment (while the “true authors of evil hide under the appearance of external responsibility”).

Cumplido asked, answering that perhaps he was imprisoned because in his previous

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88 Ibid., 4-6, “logran que los verdaderos autores del mal ocultarse bajo las apariencias de agena responsabilidad.”
Appeal to the Public, he admitted that he “understood what Gutiérrez Estrada’s writing said.”\textsuperscript{89} Defending the right to think, Cumplido reasoned that “the law of press freedom does not say that the printer should be an irrational being or incapable of forming an idea of what he reads.”\textsuperscript{90} Here, Cumplido began to construct a vision of the printer as a thinking being, who withheld his personal opinions—even when contrary to those of his customers—in order to uphold the laws of press freedom: “sacrificing my ideas, because in my profession \textit{I am not a censor}, I admitted a paper for printing, basing this action on the current laws of press freedom.”\textsuperscript{91} The fact that he accepted Gutiérrez Estrada’s paper, in spite of disliking its contents, he argued, proved that “I work with absolute impartiality in the free exercise of my profession.”\textsuperscript{92} To bolster this argument, Cumplido listed various items published in his printshop, including the government’s gazette and conservative publications. Thus, Cumplido elaborated a clear separation between the individual—whose private thoughts he might share with any author who asked them—and the professional printer, who follows a strict code of impartiality.

Cumplido’s defense vacillated between legalese (he quoted the press laws at length in support of his position) and emotional appeal (“I suffer with all the sensation that should be imprinted on the souls of those who love the betterment of their

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 6. “Cual puede ser mi delito? [...] que entendí lo que decía el escrito del Sr. Gutiérrez Estrada.”
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid. “La ley de imprenta no ha dicho que el impresor debe ser un ente irracional o incapaz de formar un concepto de lo que lee.”
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 7. “Asi es que sacrificando mis ideas admiti, por que en mi profesion \textit{no soy censor}, admiti para imprimir un papel, apoyándome en las leyes vigentes sobre libertad de imprenta.” Emphasis in original.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid. “obro con absoluta imparcialidad en el ejercicio libre de mi profesión.”
country”). Yet while he situated his case within a pattern of printer persecution, Cumplido set himself apart from others, arguing that no other printer had suffered as he had. Others were simply detained and treated “humanely and decently,” while his judge ordered him to jail “in one of the most scandalous acts in our history of misconduct.” Unlike others, however, Cumplido positioned himself as the embodiment of legality when he reasoned that “after the atrocious attack given through my person upon freedom of the press, who of those that work in typography will think themselves safe in the free exercise of their profession? For my part, I declare that I will no longer publish papers that deal with politics, until they declare that the press laws have all the value of their literal sense.” Here, Cumplido’s person—languishing in jail with common “delinquents”—became the vehicle through which the noble law itself is desecrated. Restoring him to liberty would represent only the first step in assuring the law is upheld: his future freedom must also serve as a model to safeguard the labors of the entire typographic industry and, by extension, the law.

Cumplido’s Manifesto not only forcefully critiqued government ministers, it also offered a space for the printer to express his own political platform, itself clearly shaped by the milieu that had produced the Gutiérrez Estrada pamphlet. Espousing utilitarian

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93 Ibid., 9. “sufro, con toda la sensación que debe imprimir en el alma de los que aman las mejoras de su país”
94 Ibid., 10. “uno de los actos mas escandalosos que ofrece la historia de nuestros estravíos”
95 Ibid., 12-13. My emphasis. “Despues del ataque atroz que se ha dado en mi persona a la libertad de imprenta, ¿quién de los que se dedican a la tipografía se creerá ya segura en el ejercicio libre de su profesion? Por mi parte protesto que no volveré a admitir para su publicación papeles que traten de política, hasta que no se declare si las leyes de imprenta tienen todo el valor que espresa su sentido literal.”
96 Ibid., 14.
principles, Cumplido argued for an end to ideology in favor of a pragmatic approach to addressing Mexico’s challenges: politicians needed to address the nation’s budgetary crises, fixing their attentions on income while curtailing expenses, fomenting agriculture, establishing a reliable police force, and expanding primary education. Adherence to the law, he emphasized, must trump political division in order to restore the confidence of the demoralized masses.  

At once intensely individualistic and effusively universal in its argumentation, Cumplido’s pamphlet represented the printer’s political manifesto, in which he claimed the right of the printer to think: even as he characterized the printer’s role as a disinterested one, he went on to offer informed opinions in the next breath. Although not entirely contradictory, these two positions generated a tension that did nothing to establish what role the printer really did play in the affair. Rhetoric aside, the details of the Gutiérrez Estrada case reveal that Cumplido played an active role in facilitating the production of what he knew would be a controversial pamphlet. That the printer of the government’s gazette would also issue a pamphlet advocating its overthrow seemed to support the idea of neutrality, but Cumplido’s public staking of a political position was an uncomfortable reminder that print production was neither wholly partisan nor entirely contractual. The legal formality of the responsible party, while intended to prevent controversy by holding authors to their word, did little to clarify print world practices that officials wished to discourage. In fact, it opened a space for insiders to circumvent the

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97 Ibid., 16-18.
intention of the law while still invoking its letter in the wake of persecution. Rhetorically, the printer emerged not as one who flaunted the law, but as its very embodiment: a crusader against injustice perpetrated by perfidious ministers.

Not to be caught with a single line of defense, Cumplido opened a second line of reasoning, leading to an altogether different characterization of the printer: as an artisan whose free exercise of profession was threatened by manipulations of press laws. In his serial “Defense” published in the press, Cumplido quoted legal opinions issued by the Supreme Court (penned by José Sotero de Castañeda) on proposed press legislation from 1839, which defined the problem not only as one of authorial responsibility, but in terms of industry. Restrictions on the press, the report argued, would “do a notorious injustice to a certain class of artisans, that even when considered equally as the rest, have the same right to the protection of their freedom of industry.”

The ideas expressed in the legal opinion reflected normative assumptions on the strict division between manual and intellectual labors that underpinned liberal freedom of the press laws. Explaining the issue as “purely mechanical,” the opinion suggested that “mere simple artisans” were not equipped to judge the learned content they produced. “Violations are born of intelligence,” it continued, “which cannot be assumed, under any circumstance, in a passive instrument that puts into action the will of an extraneous person, whose operations are of a completely different order than the simple movements of a

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98 Ignacio Cumplido, “Defensa del impresor,” El Mosquito Mexicano, November 6, 1840, 2-3. “se hace también una notoria injusticia á cierta clase de artesanos, que aun cuando se consideraren solo iguales á los demas, tienen el mismo derecho para que se proteja la libertad de su industria.”
99 Ibid. “es puramente mecánico”; “unos simples artesanos.”
On the one hand, “the art of printing has nothing to do with the art of thinking, of reflecting, of opining,” and by the same token, “the printer, to aptly carry out his trade, does not need to be learned, much less to the degree required to assess political doctrines, erroneous or wise opinions in complicated matters of government.”

Read against Cumplido’s own words, there are resonances and dissonances with the mechanical perspective espoused in the legal opinion. A key difference is that Cumplido reserved the right to think—to have opinions and withhold them out of neutrality—while the judge suggested that the printer cannot possibly think (indeed, the opinion nearly collapses printer and press into a single passive object), at least not to the degree required to be thrust into the role of a would-be censor. The judge critiqued the government (the case referred to its recent attempts to expand the sense of responsibility) for placing the printer into the position of censor, not for violating the law’s intent, but because it was simply ridiculous to assume a printer could possess the knowledge to judge a work.

In spite of the insult to printers, Cumplido reprinted the opinion, as it clearly supported his case in the Gutiérrez Estrada affair, although perhaps to the detriment of his intellectual honor. Prefacing the opinion, Cumplido delicately presented these ideas, endorsing them while trying to salvage respectability. Rather than using the term

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100 Ibid. “las faltas que en ésta puedan cometerse, nacen de la inteligencia, la cual no debe suponerse, bajo ningun aspecto, en un instrumento pasivo que pone en acción la voluntad de una gente estraño, cuyas operaciones son de un orden enteramente diverso de los simples movimientos de una máquina.”

101 Ibid. “El arte de imprimir nada tiene que ver con el arte de pensar, de discurrir, de opinar. [...] El impresor, para desempeñar cumplidamente su oficio, no necesita ser letrado, mucho menos serlo en el grado que se requiere para calificar doctrinas políticas, errores ó aciertos de opinion en materias complicadas de Gobierno.”
“oficio,” (trade/craft), he opted for its counterpart, “arte” (art), with its Enlightenment-era connotations, thus weaving an even more ambiguous web around the figure of the printer, now definitively caught between the twin poles of manual and intellectual labor.

Cumplido’s defense—just as it threaded through print forums—cannot be reduced to a single argument or tactic. Instead, it advanced several positions, all of which contributed not only to the case for his exoneration, but more broadly to the creation of the printer as a public figure. This image—created with legalistic arguments, emotional appeals, and the opinions of other experts—challenged the government’s specific actions as well as its long-term practices towards printers. By harnessing print to construct his own place in society, Cumplido assumed the role a different kind of producer: an intellectual, who made reasoned arguments based on study and experience. By directly attaching the plight of the printer (in individual and communal terms) to the upholding of the law, he constructed an image of the printer as crusader for justice. Yet he simultaneously advanced the more insidious characterization of the printer as a witless reproducer of texts, akin to a machine.

*Justice Won, Justice Denied*

Reports from *El Cosmopolita’s* November 25 edition suggest that Cumplido’s multi-pronged tactic to garner support had worked: over two hundred people reportedly attended his trial in the *Tercera Sala del Tribunal Superior* on November 24.¹⁰² His

¹⁰² *El Cosmopolita*, November 25, 1840, 4.
lawyer’s defense lasted for one and a quarter hours, and was “heard with satisfaction” by the assembled crowd.\(^{103}\) After an afternoon vote, Cumplido was cleared of charges.

In possession of his liberty once again, the printer immediately issued another pamphlet, this time to settle scores. Shifting from a defensive strategy based on legal and industry-based arguments, the printer brazenly attacked the judge, Gabriel Gómez de la Peña, who had presided over Cumplido’s arrest. The pamphlet is peppered with attacks on Gómez de la Peña’s “HONOR AS A JUDGE, AND REPUTATION AS A MAN OF LETTERS”: Cumplido claimed he ordered his arrest before having even read the pamphlet, and suggested the judge thought himself above the law.\(^{104}\) Rhetorically deferring to the superior experience of true letrados, Cumplido nevertheless challenged Gómez de la Peña on his legal procedures, and dared him to answer the charge in writing.

Once again, Cumplido used his printer status to speak out in favor of freedom of the press, cloaking his quarrel with Gómez de la Peña under guise of the justice crusader. He also threatened to wield his skills for the cause, vowing to print a large quantity of the present pamphlet and “order displayed for its sale, in all the capitals, towns, and principal villages of the Departments, the same advertisements that have been posted for this purpose on the street corners of this city.”\(^{105}\) Signing off with this promise of vengeance,

\(^{103}\) Ibid.

\(^{104}\) Ignacio Cumplido, *Invitación que hace el impresor C. Ignacio Cumplido al juez de letras de lo criminal licenciado D. J. Gabriel Gómez de la Peña, a fin de que esponga las disposiciones legales á que se arregló para proceder á su prision y detenerlo treinta y tres días en la cárcel de la Acordada, como impresor del folleto que escribió D. J. M. Gutierrez Estrada* (Mexico City: Impreso por el autor, 1840), 7. “SU HONOR COMO JUEZ, Y SU REPUTACION COMO LETRADO.” Capitals in original.

\(^{105}\) Ibid., 13-14. “mandar fijar para la venta de el, en todas las capitales, pueblos y villas principales de los Departamentos, los mismos avisos que se han colocado con este fin en las esquinas de esta ciudad.”
Cumplido made another tactical move: reprinting his own legal testimony from the previous month’s ordeal, again in notarized form. Conforming exactly to the transcript copied in the legal case file, the testimony made public the previously closed-door exchanges between Gómez de la Peña and Cumplido. Read in this context, Cumplido’s refusal to rat out his employees and defiant adherence to the principle of freedom of the press came across, truly, as honorable crusading.

Cumplido indeed won justice and pursued vengeance in the Gutiérrez Estrada affair. With professional knowledge of press laws and second-hand understandings of how government officials typically punished printers, Cumplido had avoided the regulatory spirit of the law while conforming carefully to its letter. While still in prison, he managed to use the episode to his advantage, wasting no time to craft a reputation as a near embodiment of legality through a media firestorm facilitated by both owning the means of production and collaborating with like-minded print workers. Perhaps being sure that his stay in prison would be short gave Cumplido the gall to take a tough stance against government questioning. Principles, combined in equal measure with a desire for self-preservation surely motivated him as well.

Francisco Berrospe, the editor responsible for the pamphlet, meanwhile, did not fare as well as Cumplido and languished in prison months after the printer gained freedom. As the days of his imprisonment dragged on, newspaper articles reprinted the Cumplido verdict and continued to gossip about Gutiérrez Estrada’s whereabouts. *El Cosmopolita* reported that he had embarked from Veracruz on a steamer bound for
Europe to pick up a touring Opera company.\textsuperscript{106} \textit{El Mosquito} suggested that a police escort had accompanied the senator in his flight out of Mexico City.\textsuperscript{107} Berrospe, for his part, followed Cumplido’s example by issuing his own serialized defense in \textit{El Mosquito} that ran for two months.\textsuperscript{108}

Berrospe’s account could not be more different than Cumplido’s. While Cumplido’s stuck to the ideals of press freedom and cited the injustice of his position, Berrospe had less opportunity to make an abstract, noble argument. He had, after all, signed his name and the argument that he had been duped was his only recourse. Unable to take the high road, Berrospe’s defense led into the maze of Mexico City’s world of print politics, into accusations of corruption, collusion, and insider politics, and to accounts of his own heroism as a crusader on issues of national importance. Perhaps his months in custody had embittered the veteran editor, or he believed that a harsh critique might galvanize support for his case. Berrospe seemed to be writing his account in installments that mirrored its publication, because over the course of his two-month public letter, Berrospe’s tone became increasingly acid and accusatory—a position that Cumplido had strategically reserved for the moment after his release from jail.

In his defense, Berrospe initially downplayed the political nature of his work as an editor, casting himself as someone who “passed [his] days at home, given over to the distractions of private life and the editing of [his] newspaper,” which he “sustains more

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{El Cosmopolita}, December 2, 1840, 4.
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{El Mosquito Mexicano}, December 4, 1840, 4.
\textsuperscript{108} Francisco Berrospe, “Al público,” \textit{El Mosquito Mexicano}, January 1, 5, 8, 12, 15, 19, 22, 26, 29, February 2, 5, 9, 12, 23, 26, 1841.
for entertainment than utility.”¹⁰⁹ The peace of this allegedly disinterested endeavor was shattered by Martín Rivera, who Berrospe accused of leading him down the path to deception at the hands of Senator Gutiérrez Estrada. Believing that Gutiérrez Estrada wished Berrospe to publish his notebooks in El Mosquito Mexicano, Berrospe accompanied Rivera to Gutiérrez Estrada’s house, whose scene he described in detail, noting the “multitude of books [...] grandiose paintings,” and the seating arrangement that placed “Rivera and I side by side, opposite Mr. Estrada.”¹¹⁰ Using “beautiful [...] speech,” “exact logic,” and his superior social status, Gutiérrez Estrada tricked Berrospe into complete accord—in part by not mentioning the monarchy aspect and in part by feeding Berrospe his own political ideas as pretext.¹¹¹ When it became clear that Cumplido, rather than Berrospe, was the intended publisher, Berrospe claimed to have been already so taken in that he agreed to help in any way possible.

Berrospe’s account of the following events followed the line of his testimony, but with grander expressions of honorable character. In one key difference, Berrospe referred to himself numerous times in his letter as the editor of Gutiérrez Estrada’s manuscript—

¹⁰⁹ Francisco Berrospe, “Al público,” El Mosquito Mexicano, January 1, 1841, 2. “Yo pasaba mis días en mi casa, entregado a las distracciones de la vida privada y a la redacción de mi periódico, que en el día más sostengo por entretenimiento que por utilidad, y menos por esperanza de ver remediados los abusos y establecida una marcha grata y benéfica a la sociedad mexicana.”
¹¹⁰ Ibid. Berrospe’s description constructs Gutiérrez Estrada as something of an impassioned intellectual, who leaves books lying around in disorder as he conspires in luxury. By highlighting the spatial arrangement of the seating, Berrospe casts Rivera in the role of co-accomplice. “Pasados los cumplimientos de urbanidad y respeto que reciprocamente nos obligaban, tomamos asiento en una decente pieza que contenía multitud de libros, unos colocados en estantes y otros botados en el suelo, con desorden. Lo mismo se notaba con grandiosos cuadros que arrebataban la atención, aun de los ojos más versados en el buen gusto de la pintura. Nuestras sillas fueron colocadas en disposición que formaban un ángulo recto: Rivera y yo estábamos juntos y el Sr. Estrada, á nuestro frente.”
¹¹¹ Ibid., 3. “su dialecto era bello y su lógica exacta.”
an association he defended under press laws. Trying to carve out a more active—and also ambiguous—role for himself, Berrospe hoped to convince others that he was something other than the responsible party, and yet not quite so pathetic as one duped into signing by the other conspirators.

Alleging shock at the speed with which the pamphlet appeared for sale in the Portal de Mercaderes, Berrospe related the events of his arrest as a series of indignations. Dragged by officials to the Café de Verolí, he was brought humiliatingly before the Auditor Zozaya, who was playing his customary card game. “Yes, yes, yes, yes,” the judge replied waving Berrospe’s keepers away as he turned to resume his game, “arrest him.” In subsequent issues, Berrospe took direct aim at the judge, calling him a “servile agent” of the Minister of the Interior—a stooge of the executive branch rather than an executor of justice—who had toadied up to officials for career advancement.

Berrospe’s increasingly woeful tale worked to establish his image as an idealist unafraid to risk personal liberty in the service of ideals. He recounted his own activities as a veteran participant in Mexico City print politics, which had resulted in three previous imprisonments. Differently from Cumplido’s emphasis on impartiality, Berrospe focused on politics as a struggle to achieve a better world, with himself as veteran fighter—but one who had lost everything in the fight to bring about change. Disillusioned, betrayed by the country he tried to improve through his editorial labors, Berrospe signed off his

112 Ibid. “Hallamos al celeberrieno auditor Zozaya en el cafè de Veroli, jugando su tresillo de costumbre, y como si hubiera puesto una pica en Flandes, dijo si, si, si, si, que se le arreste.” Guillermo Prieto discusses the café in his memoirs. See Prieto, Memoria de mis tiempos 1828 a 1853, 48.
embittered letter, “It isn’t madness to say that J.F. Berrospe is a man without a
country.”

Although he followed Cumplido’s example, Berrospe proved unable to use the
rules of responsibility to his advantage. True, behind the scenes Berrospe’s case had
stalled as a succession of judges recused themselves and the well-meaning but apparently
incompetent Auditor violated protocol by seeking out three separate opinions when he
deemed their sentences too harsh. But Berrospe’s public letter failed to draw
significant public interest, in part because his tale of woe became increasingly embittered
and accusatory in its tale of insider print world scandal, and in part because he failed to
convince supporters that the charges of responsibility were, in fact, misplaced. Like many
other print world actors before him, Berrospe regained liberty, a year after his jailing,
when a change in power brokered by General Santa Anna offered amnesty to political
prisoners.

**Conclusion: Situational Identities and Public Archetypes**

The Gutiérrez Estrada case vividly revealed that controversial materials came into
being through complicated negotiations between authors, printers and editors. These
negotiations not only emerged out of the realities of print production but also responded
to legal attempts to clarify who was responsible for the production of texts, which in turn

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decir que está sin patria J.F. Berrospe.”

115 AGN, Gobernación, Archivo de Guerra, vol. 766, exp s/n. His superiors harshly rebuked Zozaya for
violating protocol and ordered him to re-start the case from scratch. The three judicial opinions, on the
other hand, reveal the flexibility of the “responsibility” category with sentences from seven years to
outright dismissal of charges.
reacted to on-the-ground printing logistics. Enforcing officials as well as printers, however, both seized upon the ostensibly defined but clearly contingent category of the “responsible party” in something of a cat-and-mouse game. If officials wielded or bent the law to punish political enemies and discourage polemical publications by pinning responsibility on the printer, printers appealed with legal language to contest this action. In their words, responsibility always lay elsewhere, and indeed, government officials rarely succeeded in punishing printers in the long term, in part because political instability offered so many chances for amnesty.

As this case shows, however, printers also escaped trouble because a hegemonic definition of responsibility for printed items remained elusive. Print production involved multi-stage, sometimes indirect interactions, and printers exploited this murkiness, articulating a dual discourse in legal testimony and public writings that cast the printer alternately as a deep thinking crusader for justice, or as an impassive mechanic. Articulated most eloquently in Ignacio Cumplido’s public writings, these two positions—held in uncomfortable tension—sought to resolve the question of responsibility in printers’ favor, while claiming a greater public role for printers as individuals who, because they operated under the strictest standards of legality, could offer their opinions on the nation’s political and legal troubles.

For Cumplido, whose ability to maneuver may also have been backed by political patronage relationships unrecorded in historical documentation, the Gutiérrez Estrada case was, in fact, a watershed moment that opened a brighter path forward: the following year, he won a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, and pursued a platform of prison reform
inspired by his own spell in the Acordada jail. His partnership (with José Jimeno at the Imprenta del Aguila) for printing the government newspaper ended, Cumplido launched his public career while simultaneously crafting an archetype for the printer that, pushing aside partisan politics, reveled in the ambiguity of its role. Impartial artisan, faithful servant of the law, honorable employer, wronged mechanic—these characterizations sidestepped the inevitable question of politics, while establishing the printer as a crusading force to be reckoned with by politicians. By highlighting, in part, his artisanal status in a well-reasoned public defense, Cumplido implicitly posited himself as an intellectual. By midcentury, printers claimed increasingly prominent, clearly-defined roles for themselves—as cultural, literary, and moral arbiters—clashing in polemics that interwove printed materials and new printshop identities with the hardening political debates of Mexico’s liberal-conservative conflict.

Chapter 3. Printing Polemic: Imported Bestsellers, Editorial Brinksmanship and Church-State Politics

In late summer of 1850, a French novel grabbed the attention of the archbishopric of Mexico City. Set in sixteenth-century Spain, *The Mysteries of the Inquisition* by M. V. de Féréal, translated into Spanish and released in newspaper installments and as a book by the printshop of Vicente García Torres, narrated the plight of a pious young heroine, Dolores, as she flees the ignoble designs of the corrupt and murderous Grand Inquisitor of Seville, Pedro Arbues. As Dolores endeavors to escape Arbues’s clutches, she receives aid from a cast of colorful characters—criminals with consciences, pious Catholics, a vengeful woman disguised as a priest—who help her evade the Inquisitor and travel by sea with her betrothed to the Protestant Netherlands.

Examining a copy printed in New Orleans in 1846, the censor assigned to the case, Dr. José María Diez de Sollano, prepared a report calling the novel “pernicious and full of venom.” The censorship board (*Junta de Censura*) of Mexico City’s archdiocese agreed that the novel was “anti-Catholic and worthy of being prohibited,” and issued a decree threatening those who read or possessed the volume with excommunication.

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2 José María Diez de Sollano, *Dictamen que el doctor Don José María Diez de Sollano, cura interino del Sagrario Metropolitano, y Rector del colegio de S. Gregorio, emitió sobre la obra intitulada Misterios de la inquisicion y que hizo suyo la Junta diocesana de censura, y ha mandado publicar el Sr. Vicario Capitular de este arzobispado* (Mexico City: Tipografía de R. Rafael, 1850), 5, 58. “perniciosos y [lleno] de veneno.”
3 AGN, Gobernación, sin sección, caja 378, exp. 1. Decree dated September 5, 1850. “anti-católica y digna de prohibirse.”
Mysteries clearly posed a challenge to religious authority, and not only through its textual content. Leafing through the New Orleans edition he used as his reading copy, Diez de Sollano would have encountered a series of troubling lithographs, which had been adapted from the original Paris edition. The Mexican edition, as Diez de Sollano had surely already learned, was practically bursting with a far greater number of reproductions of the original French engravings that heightened the novel’s affective power. The illustrations brought readers down from tranquil vistas of a lush, exotic Seville into its seamy underbelly of back alleys, taverns, and dens of petty thieves; and deeper into the heart of Inquisitorial corruption. Graphic images of torture in dungeons (the rack, burning feet, nailed hands, water torture) and sexual coercion in bed chambers and convents depicted priests as members of a secret cabal, hell-bent on destroying innocent lives for pleasure. (Figure 14)

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4 The censor consulted the 1846 New Orleans edition because the Mexico City edition was still under production in the printshop of Vicente García Torres, and only some of the novel’s installments had been released in book and newspaper form. Two New Orleans editions were released in 1846 from the same printshop—in French and in Spanish; Diez de Sollano consulted the Spanish version. The Spanish edition condensed the French text into a smaller number of chapters, but both contained lithographs by Charles Risso—a well-known New York lithographer who briefly worked in New Orleans—that were mirror images of the original French engravings used in the Boizard Paris edition of 1844, suggesting Risso had traced the images to make his own. New Orleans printers also published the novel in the Spanish language newspaper La Patria. M. V. de Féréal, Mystères de l'inquisition et autres sociétés secrètes d'Espagne (New Orleans: De l'imprimerie de J. L. Sollée, 1846); Misterios de la inquisición y otras sociedades secretas de España (New Orleans: Imprenta de J. L. Sollée, 1846).

5 The French engravings had been reproduced as stereotypes, a process by which a paper mold is taken of the original relief block and used to cast a metal copy. Several images in the Mexican edition show tell tale traces of the nails used to attach the metal plates to a wooden base for printing. Compare, for example, the “Muerte de Pedro Arbues” inserted after page 268 in the Mexican edition with “Mort de Pierre Arbues” after page 506 in the Paris edition. Mystères de l'inquisition et autres sociétés secrètes d'Espagne (Paris: Boizard, 1845).
The imported novel distressed religious officials not only because of its disturbing imagery and titillating plot but because it was dressed with trappings of historical accuracy that resonated locally. The text used the names of real historical figures (like the inquisitor Arbues) and extensive footnotes that commented on the Spanish Inquisition and its protocols. Mexico City readers would undoubtedly connect the text’s fictional critique to local history, not least because the Mexican edition charted the history of

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6 The question of the political valences of the novel—which circulated contemporaneously in France, Spain, England, Italy, the United States, and Mexico, remain under-explored. Léger-St-Jean, "Price One Penny: A Database of Cheap Literature, 1837-1860".

7 Germillan’s collaborator Manuel Cuendias alleged that his notes came from examining records of the Inquisition in the Seville municipal archives. Ibid.
Mexico’s own Inquisition in a detailed appendix. In 1850, furthermore, the novel clearly spoke to contemporary developments that increasingly preoccupied political elites and religious authorities: the emerging ideological conflict between liberals and conservatives.

The partisan contests of the early republic—in which printers played an active, if largely behind-the-scenes role as producers of controversial materials that questioned government authority—had by 1850 given way to an ideologically polarized political landscape. Mexico’s devastating defeat at the hands of the U.S. army in 1847, resulting in the loss of half its national territory, failed to unite the radical, moderate, and conservative factions that struggled to define the contours of Mexico’s political system. Instead, it precipitated a crisis that conservatives exploited to point out the failings of the republican system and advocate its end. Top Mexico City printers, this chapter argues, participated actively in the polarization of Mexico’s political landscape after the United States’ invasion, moving beyond their roles as facilitators and taking on more clearly ideological positions, especially as the owners of a triumvirate of top newspapers: Ignacio Cumplido’s moderate *Siglo Diez y Nueve*, Vicente García Torres’s radical *El Monitor Republicano*, and Rafael Rafael’s conservative *El Universal*. By 1850 these stridently partisan newspapers routinely tangled in polemics that dripped with sarcasm and full frontal attacks on each other’s writings, touching upon all the major issues of the

8 The simultaneous outbreak of the Caste Wars in which indigenous groups in the Yucatán and Huasteca regions rebelled against the state added to the crisis. For an overview of political divisions leading up to the war, see Will Fowler, *Mexico in the Age of Proposals, 1821-1853* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998).
day. One central question debated in printed polemics focused on the role of the Catholic Church in state affairs and its position as the nation’s largest landowner.

Thus, before readers encountered *The Mysteries* in the columns of García Torres’s *El Monitor Republicano*, they had been primed to understand the novel through the lens of contemporary politics. Indeed, by the time the archbishopric banned the book in September, it had been under discussion in the press for three months. This chapter examines the evolving polemic that unfolded prior to and around the publication of *The Mysteries*, and eventually garnered the attentions of the highest religious and civil authorities. By exploring the event from the ground up (rather than simply as an example of church censorship handed down from on high), it traces the emergence—alongside the evolution of the local printing industry and its sharpening political loyalties during and after the U.S. invasion of Mexico—of printers’ (especially liberal printers’) articulations of editorial identities. These articulations worked, in newspapers and literary paratexts aimed at educated audiences, to construct new cultural roles for printers as intellectuals and cultural gatekeepers. As such, they pushed beyond more familiar characterizations (explored in the previous chapter) that cast printers as political pawns or unwitting laborers.

When García Torres published the anti-Catholic *Mysteries of the Inquisition*, he did so not initially as a printer but by describing himself as the foreign work’s publisher (editor). In Mexico, the emergence of editorial identities added another option in printers’ repertoire of public personae (differently from the case of nineteenth-century France where Christine Haynes argues printers lost economic and political influence to
publishers) and revealed the degree to which publishing and print production overlapped in spite or because of printers’ efforts.\textsuperscript{10} The taking on of the editorial persona in turn ran up against broader political debates, in this case over the authority of church and state. Coming as it did precisely as these divisions crystalized into points of open conflict, the publication of \textit{The Mysteries of the Inquisition} challenged church power. Although the church enjoyed a relatively stable, if wary relationship with the moderate Herrera administration (1848-51), its influence had begun to erode at the parish level, even as its properties and privileges increasingly drew the attentions of political elites who wished to dismantle or expand the church’s position in Mexico.\textsuperscript{11} By banning the book, therefore, the archbishopric redoubled efforts to assert church power in spectacular fashion. The ensuing struggle over \textit{The Mysteries}, however, revealed the problem to be more complicated than religious officials had expected, as the church found itself drawn into a confrontation—engineered by the printer García Torres—with state officials. The

\textsuperscript{10} In nineteenth-century France, Haynes argues, book editors emerged as a new independent group to challenge the economic dominance (guaranteed by legal privileges) of long-powerful families of printers in the field of publishing. Similarly, in late-eighteenth century Britain, copyright changes encouraged the rise of a publishing industry separate from printing and bookselling. In Mexico City, however, clear distinctions and direct confrontation between two interest groups did not exist, due to the lack of formal state protections for printers, and the realities of production and print markets. The transformation from colony to republic entailed a different set of economic circumstances and printers retained publishing power longer. Christine Haynes, \textit{Lost Illusions: the Politics of Publishing in Nineteenth-Century France} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). Fyfe, \textit{Steam-Powered Knowledge}, 19.

\textsuperscript{11} Matthew O’Hara describes how by 1850, parish priests in Mexico City struggled to collect rents on church property, as payment arrangements mediated by local civil officials had allowed the \textit{ayuntamiento} to wedge between the parish and its members. Matthew D. O’Hara, \textit{A Flock Divided: Race, Religion, and Politics in Mexico, 1749-1857} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 211. On the relative rapprochement between the moderate liberal government of Herrera and the church hierarchy, see Marta Eugenia García Ugarte, \textit{Poder político y religioso: México siglo XIX}, vol. 1 (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales / M.Á. Porrúa, 2010), 348. Fowler, \textit{Mexico in the Age of Proposals}, 158.
publication and censorship of *The Mysteries* reveals how printers’ activities contributed to growing polarization, even as they used the divisions they fomented to gain greater influence in and beyond the realm of politics.

**Setting the Stage for Conflict: the U.S. Invasion and the Rise of Political Printers**

War with the United States profoundly shaped Mexico’s political landscape. As U.S. troops campaigned in northern Mexico, fractious print politics in the capital contributed to the escalation of tensions as elites sparred over how to confront invaders. When radical president Gómez Farías tried to raise cash for the war effort by seizing and selling church properties, provoking outcry from church officials and conservatives, the press debated whether his actions were founded.\(^{12}\) The governor of Mexico City reported to the Minister of External Affairs that broadsides posted on the public corners and church doors were provoking “disorders from the disputes of those that read them, some defending the pros, and others the cons of their content.”\(^ {13}\) Acting on a tip, the governor had tried to stop the printing of the broadside in question—a defense of the church’s position—but the printer, a conservative named José Mariano Fernández de Lara, had lied to his face before producing the item the following day. Warning that civil authority “would be exposed to ridicule as it has been today by Mr. Lara,” the governor asked for help from ministry officials.\(^ {14}\) Two days later the governor appealed again, lamenting that


\(^{13}\) AGN, Gobernación, legajo 176, exp. 7, no. 69. “causando algunos desordenes por las disputas de los que los leyan defendiendo unos el pró, y otros la contra de su contenido.”

\(^{14}\) Ibid. “se expondrá a ser burlada como lo ha sido hoy por el Sr. Lara”
no fiscales de imprenta, the appointed officials charged with denouncing abuses of press laws, could be found to do the job. While he suggested that imprints had violated press laws, the governor’s goals in denouncing them were clearly partisan: all three broadsides advanced conservative positions. The governor’s frustrations revealed that printers’ efforts had again overrun officials’ ability to rein in print. The verso of one of the offending broadsides, peeled off a wall and submitted as evidence, offered material testament to an endless overlay of printed positions: the textual fragments of multiple broadsides—and plenty of paint pigment—show the routine place of print in the city’s urban landscape. (Figure 15)

![Figure 15: Detail, verso of a broadside peeled off the wall, including plaster, other broadsides, and paint.](image)

Source: AGN, Gobernación, legajo 176, exp. 7, no. 72.

If some Mexico City printers advanced partisan positions even as invasion loomed, not all stood their ground as U.S. troops advanced on the capital. The liberal

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15 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 176, exp. 7, no. 72.
printer Ignacio Cumplido, who had weathered his own share of political troubles, packed up and traveled to Europe, leaving others to manage his affairs, to the detriment of his newspaper’s public standing and subscription levels.\textsuperscript{16} In other circumstances, Cumplido’s continental tour might have looked like the completion of a rite of passage, one that marked and cultivated the social standing of elite Mexican men.\textsuperscript{17} Born in Jalisco in 1811, Cumplido was the son of a professor of medicine and had moved to Mexico City as a youth to seek his fortune, working briefly as a typesetter before establishing his own printshop in 1832.\textsuperscript{18} As a printer of provincial origins, Cumplido surely pinned great hopes on the voyage as a means to enhance his worldliness and social standing, which he had cultivated since bursting onto the political scene with his 1840 media firestorm. With the nation in danger, however, the positive valences of his travels were drowned out amid greater concerns.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16} Carlos María de Bustamante commented in his diary that Cumplido’s newspaper \textit{El Siglo Diez y Nueve} had begun to go downhill ever since its owner had left for Europe. The nail in the coffin, in Bustamante’s view, was the resignation of the politician Mariano Otero from the editorial staff in June of 1847. Otero resigned in order to be able to openly critique the policies of the government, even in the face of military defeat. When Santa Anna ordered the newspapers to tone down their criticisms, Otero resigned in protest. June 22, 1847. Bustamante, \textit{Diario histórico de México, 1822-1848}.

\textsuperscript{17} On the importance of being an “hombre del mundo,” and the prestige accumulated by Mexican elites in travels to Europe, see Víctor Manuel Macías-González, "Hombres del mundo: la masculinidad, el consumo, y los manuales de urbanidad y buenas maneras," in \textit{Orden social e identidad de género: México, siglos XIX y XX}, ed. María Teresa Fernández Aceves, Carmen Ramos-Escandón, and Susie S. Porter (Mexico City: CIESAS, 2006), 274.

\textsuperscript{18} María Esther Pérez Salas Cantú, "Los secretos de una empresa exitosa: la imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido," in \textit{Constructores de un cambio cultural: impresores-editores y libreros en la ciudad de México, 1830-1855}, ed. Laura Suárez de la Torre (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr José María Luis Mora, 2003), 104-105.

\textsuperscript{19} Cumplido would only publically capitalize on his European travels much later in life, when he completed a second tour of the continent and sent home regular reports that were published in his \textit{El Siglo Diez y Nueve}, \textit{El Socialista} (beginning March 8, 1884), and as a stand-alone volume, Ignacio Cumplido, \textit{Impresiones de viaje} (Mexico City: Tip. de I. Cumplido, 1884).
As Cumplido embarked on a grand tour, Vicente García Torres, an upstart printer of even more obscure origins, emerged on the scene as the embodiment of radical republican valor. García Torres’s newspaper El Monitor Republicano articulated the ideologies of radicalism, which supported liberal republicanism, popular participation in government, freedom of religion and the disentailment of church property.\textsuperscript{20} In comparison, Cumplido’s Siglo Diez y Nueve presented a moderate position, which advocated gradual liberal reform that struck a balance between traditionalism and radical transformation.\textsuperscript{21} García Torres was also born in 1811, to a poor family in a village in the state of Hidalgo. He allegedly received a break when José Morán y del Villar, Marqués de Vivanco, took an interest in the youth during a chance meeting and eventually made him his secretary, bringing him along on two voyages to England, where García Torres is reputed to have learned the printing trade in the late 1820s and mid 1830s. Upon returning to Mexico, with a Swiss wife, García Torres jumped into the printing business, likely with support from his former patron.\textsuperscript{22}

As Cumplido’s political comrades eagerly awaited their printer’s return, García Torres gained in public stature by strongly criticizing the Santa Anna government—which had by then overthrown Gomez Farías’s more radical administration—in spite of the general’s warnings.\textsuperscript{23} He also joined the war effort, volunteering (albeit late in the

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  \item \textsuperscript{20} Fowler, Mexico in the Age of Proposals, 170.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 152.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Othón Nava Martínez, "La empresa editorial de Vicente García Torres, 1838-1853," in Constructores de un cambio cultural: impresores-editores y libreros en la ciudad de México, 1830-1855, ed. Laura Suárez de la Torre (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr José María Luis Mora, 2003), 256-257.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} The journalist Juan Rodríguez Puebla repeatedly updated fellow moderado Manuel Riva Palacio of Cumplido’s impending arrival in April, 1848 letters. Benson Library, Mariano Riva Palacio Collection,
game) as a lieutenant colonel in the “Independence Regiment,” which he commemorated by printing up one of his speeches, which defended the dual right to oppose the government and fight off the invaders to his “compañeros de armas.” His unapologetic critiques of the Santa Anna administration in the face of invasion, which Carlos María de Bustamante described in his diary as “audacious and decided,” earned García Torres—through the performance of a virile masculinity unafraid to defend ideals while battling the enemy—a degree of notoriety, and the business of the moderate readers who had once favored Cumplido’s Siglo Diez y Nueve.

García Torres’s friend and collaborator, the poet, journalist, and liberal politician Guillermo Prieto, privately counseled him (while apologizing for being unable to repay a loan) against giving fuel to the invaders by discussing “our army, our politics, our miseries” in the Monitor and suggested he drop the aggressive war mongering in favor of a more conciliatory politics that “show a certain resignation with the actual state of things.” Bustamante agreed that García Torres’s press efforts were “more useful in the exterior than amongst us,” claiming that U.S. General Winfield Scott was rumored to

Juan Rodriguez Puebla to Riva Palacio, April 9, 1848 (letter #2585), April 13, 1848 (#2594) and April 18, 1848 (#2604). Bustamante noted García Torres’s strong stance: June 22, 1847. Bustamante, Diario histórico de México, 1822-1848.
24 Ibid. August 11, 1847. “Vicente García Torres, Teniente Coronel del Regimiento de la Independencia a sus conciudadanos compañeros de armas” consulted in Sutro Library, SMBC6, Proclamaciones 1824-1888, no. 76.
25 Ibid. June 22, 1847. “Es audaz y decidido.” Juan de la Granja mentioned García Torres’s dogged bravery (he accompanied General Francisco Pérez back to the city even when the majority of the general’s troops had apparently deserted) in a letter to Manuel Ascorve, September 1, 1847. Granja, Epistolario, 167.
26 Biblioteca Nacional, Fondo Reservado, Archivos y Manuscritos, MS 10276, Cartas privadas de Guillermo Prieto a Don Vicente García Torres entre 1847 y 1861, September 23, 1847. “de nuestro ejército, de nuestra política, de nuestras miserias;” “muestra cierta resignación con el estado actual de cosas.”
have said he would not dare to take on Santa Anna, were it not for his “support in Mexico,” in the form of the printer’s divisive tactics.27

Bustamante’s confidence of a Mexican victory—shared by other observers based in Mexico City—evaporated in the coming months as U.S. troops captured the capital.28 Residents reported cowering in their houses, desperate for news, and reliant only on “what the Newspapers say” for their information.29 Upon occupying the city, U.S. troops enacted a bold physical and symbolic takeover by commandeering the printshop of the national government’s contractor, the Imprenta del Aguila. There, they installed the New Orleans printer-journalists John Peoples and Jason Barnard—who had followed the U.S. army along its overland route, issuing newspapers in Veracruz and Xalapa—to run the shop.30 Mexican elites still shaken by the fighting outside their homes were surely horrified to see English printed as the leading language on the front page of the American Star, which Peoples and Barnard issued on the Imprenta del Aguila’s presses. The bilingual newspaper oriented invading readers to the heart of the nation’s communications apparatus with the instructions, in English, that the newspapers’ headquarters could be found in the Calle de Medinas, “within half a block of the

27 Bustamante, Diario histórico de México, 1822-1848. August 11, 1847. “Este cambiante acaso ha sido más útil en el exterior que entre nosotros, pues Scott dijo a personas de confianza que conocía, que era poca su fuerza para atacar a Santa Anna, y que si lo hacía era contando con el partido que tenía en México.”
28 The merchant and entrepreneur Juan de la Granja, for example, penned numerous letters to friends and colleagues in Mexico City, New York, and Cuba remarking on the rumored deterioration of Scott’s troops (from illness or battle losses) until the invaders arrived in Mexico City. Granja, Epistolario.
29 UT, Mariano Riva Palacio Collection, José Joaquín Castañares to Riva Palacio, October 16, 1847 (letter #2438). “lo que dicen los Periodicos”
Meanwhile, the Imprenta de Aguila’s owner, Supreme Court Justice Juan Gómez de Navarrete worked behind the scenes to get the U.S. army to pay for using his presses.\(^3\)

Far from jolting the nation into a new sense of unity, the devastating war, historians agree, deepened political divisions among Mexico’s elite and resulted in the emergence of a conservative party—led by statesman Lucas Alamán—that polarized debate around how to remedy the failures of governance and persistent economic woes.\(^3\)

Printers played an important role in this process. Not only political positions, but also personal rivalries, which morphed into or mapped onto ideological divisions, paralleled and exacerbated high-level political discord.

One such rivalry emerged after a disgruntled ex-employee of the printer Ignacio Cumplido—still on his war hiatus in Europe—aired his complaints about his former patron in a series of scattered communiqués in the Mexico City press.\(^3\) Born in Barcelona in 1817, the printer Rafael Rafael had learned the trades of printing and engraving before traveling to New York, where he worked for Spanish publisher and merchant Juan de la Granja (owner of the Imprenta Española) on the publication of a pan-

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\(^3\) The American Star, September 23, 1847.
\(^3\) In September of 1847, Navarrete (then a Supreme Court Judge) signed a legal document empowering the Spanish printer/merchant/entrepreneur Juan de la Granja to solicit the return of the commandeered press or secure rent for its use. AHN, Ramon de la Cueva #169, September 29, 1847 2nd Tomo, fol. 759. By late October, Granja reported his success in a letter to Navarrete: Peoples had agreed to mediation between two proxies (Granja had appointed the Spanish printer Rafael Rafael while Peoples chose one Kendall, presumably an American), who negotiated a rental rate of 210 pesos per month. Granja, Epistolario, 208-209.
\(^3\) Fowler, Mexico in the Age of Proposals; Hale, Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 15.
\(^3\) El Monitor Republicano November 27, 1847, 2-3. According to this published letter to the editor, Rafael had complained in two communiqués, dated January and October of 1847.
Hispanic newspaper. Granja, who had trade connections in Cuba, Venezuela, and Mexico, helped Rafael secure employment with Cumplido in Mexico City, but Rafael soon became dissatisfied with his situation. In a letter published in El Monitor Republicano, Rafael accused Cumplido of luring him away from a good job in New York on false promises of partnership, shared profits, and financial success. Beyond accusing Cumplido outright of being a liar, the letter pulled back the curtain on Cumplido’s printshop business, mocking him for believing he had developed ingenious inventions that Rafael knew were in fact two centuries old. By suggesting that Cumplido had pretended to own motor-operated printing presses before he actually had, Rafael attacked one of the key characteristics top printers used to construct their public personae: possession of cutting edge technologies acquired from abroad. He also questioned Cumplido’s integrity by describing the underhanded way in which he operated his printshop, suggesting he endeavored to “keep all his employees in perpetual enmity” by seeding distrust through gossip.

 granja, Epistolario, 387. Granja had lived in Mexico before being expelled along with others of Spanish origin in 1827. In the 1830s, he sold printing equipment from the New York manufacturer R. Hoe & Company throughout Latin America, including La Guaira, Caracas, Havana, and Veracruz. Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Richard M. Hoe and Company Records, box 36, letterbook, fol. 118. He is also credited with establishing the telegraph in Mexico.

 36 For a thorough treatment of the Rafael-Cumplido polemic, see Javier Rodríguez Piña, "Rafael de Rafael y Vilá: El conservadurismo como empresa,” in Constructores de un cambio cultural: impresores-editores y libreros en la ciudad de México, 1830-1855, ed. Laura Suárez de la Torre (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr José María Luis Mora, 2003), 305-380; “La prensa y las ideas conservadores a mediados del siglo XIX”, in Tipos y caracteres: la prensa mexicana, 1822-1855, ed. Miguel Angel Castro (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2001), 253-264.

 37 Rafael Rafael, “Don Ignacio Cumplido y sus dependientes,” El Monitor Republicano, December 1, 1847. “tener en perpetua enemistad a todos sus dependientes”

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on the typesetter, this one spies on the printer, the printer on the bookkeeper, this one on
the cashier, etc. etc. etc.”

Cumplido’s friends defended the printer’s reputation in his absence, publishing a
series of his letters that countered Rafael’s assertions. The absent printer’s supporters
lauded him as the “premier typographer of our country,” and assembled supporting
evidence from other Mexico City printers. But if Cumplido’s friends defended his
reputation from outside the printshop—commenting vaguely on his typographical genius
and innovativeness—Rafael rolled up his sleeves to engage the dirty details of print
production, using his insider knowledge to tarnish Cumplido’s name.

Rafael’s personal attack was perfectly timed to explain the dissolution of their
business collaboration, which ended just as U.S. troops had withdrawn from Mexico City.
In 1848, Cumplido returned from Europe and began rebuilding his reputation, restarting
the Siglo Diez y Nueve in May, and picking up patronage ties with old friends like
Mexico State’s governor Mariano Riva Palacio, whom he invited to contribute to the
newspaper and who subsequently fed Cumplido the business of printing the state’s 1848
annual report (memoria). By March of 1848, Rafael had started his own printshop, with
the considerable financial backing (20,000 pesos) of Mariano Galvez and Mariano

38 Ibid. “En su casa, el encuadernador es el espía del cajista, este lo es del impresor, el impresor del tenedor
de libros, éste del cajero, &c., &c., &c.”
39 El Monitor Republicano November 27, 1847, 2-3. “Primer tipógrafo de nuestro país;” “que toda esta
ciudad conoce;” “el espíritu de orden, la constancia y probidad.” The printers Bonifacio Conejo and
Leandro Valdés both submitted January 1847 letters sent to them by Cumplido, which supported
Cumplido’s telling of the events: Cumplido laid out a series of narrations, and asked the letter recipients if
they did not agree with his version. They assented.
40 Benson Library, Mariano Riva Palacio Collection, Ignacio Cumplido to Riva Palacio, May 25, 1848
(letter #2658) and November 18, 1848 (#2981).
Troncoso, who he should repay over time. Several months later, Rafael launched *El Universal*, the newspaper that most successfully expressed the coalescing conservative line, which advocated strong central government, the preservation of traditional privileges (including the role of the Catholic Church), and a plan of limited suffrage. The close timing between Rafael’s public falling out with Cumplido and the former’s seamless transition into the role of conservative printer suggests that, during Cumplido’s absence, Rafael had cultivated his own networks with powerful insiders in search of a better situation. While it is difficult to determine whether Rafael’s grievances were founded or contrived to explain a break motivated by ideological differences, they enraged Cumplido, who brought Rafael to court and decried his impudence in private letters. In either case, the event reveals how internal print politics could align with outside events—here, the development of a conservative party—to produce a new constellation of actors and relationships with farther ranging political influence.

Meanwhile, Vicente García Torres, his virulence unchecked, soon fell afoul of conservative leader Lucas Alamán, who engineered to have him jailed as the printer

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41 AHN, Daniel Méndez, #433, March 8, 1848. Discussed in Rodríguez Piña, "Rafael de Rafael y Vilá: El conservadurismo como empresa," 161.
43 Rodríguez Piña, "Rafael de Rafael y Vilá: El conservadurismo como empresa." As Piña recounts, Cumplido and Rafael sued each other for libel. In private correspondence, Cumplido recounted his annoyance at Rafael’s public attacks and expressed satisfaction in believing he had outmaneuvered his rival in the court of public opinion. Sylvia Cárdenas Iglesias and Delia de Peña Guajardo, eds., * Correspondencia de Ignacio Cumplido a León Ortigosa en la Biblioteca del Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey* (Monterrey: Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, 1969).
44 1848 also witnessed the founding of the Imprenta de la Voz de la Religion, a press established in a deal between the Mexico City cleric Buenaventura Armengol and the printer Tomas Zalero to publish the newspaper *Voz de la Religion* in support of church positions. Armengol put up the capital of 22,000 pesos, while Zalero dedicated his labor (for a salary) to the endeavor. AHN, Jose Maria Guerrero, #290, August 23, 1853, fol. 92.
responsible for a November 4, 1849 article reprinted in *El Monitor Republicano* from a
Oaxaca newspaper, which referred to Alamán as the “murderer of general [Vicente]
Guerrero,” rehashing decades-old accusations that had been re-published earlier that
year.\(^\text{45}\) In a creative and insolent statement (*auto*) directed from prison to the overseeing
judge, García Torres used the Spanish Royal Academy of Language’s dictionary—a
move he wryly implied would appeal to Alamán’s monarchist sentiments—to argue that
he was neither a printer, nor a publisher, nor an author, and thus bore no legal
responsibility for the problematic imprint. Listing and sidestepping this gamut of possibly
problematic identifications, the printer ignobly blamed his subordinates and the original
Oaxacan authors of the reprinted article. “A printer,” García Torres reasoned, “is
understood according to the law, its spirit, and reason, as the manager of a typographic
establishment, who handles the entrusted imprints. ... I am not the administrator of the
typographic establishment where the newspaper entitled “El Monitor” is printed:
therefore I am not the printer of which the law speaks.”\(^\text{46}\)

Alamán, lecturing the judge who solicited his reply, dismissed his rival as an
ignorant who, “with the aid of the Dictionary and the most inflexible syllogistic form,

\(^{45}\) AGN, TSJDF, 1849, caja 262 (box 5 in 1849 series), exp. s/n. Fowler explains that old accusations
(likely true but not definitively proven) that Lucas Alamán had engineered Vicente Guerrero’s 1831
execution reappeared in anti-Alamán editorial coverage in the *Monitor Republicano* earlier in 1849.

\(^{46}\) AGN, TSJDF, 1849, caja 262 (box 5 in 1849 series), exp. s/n. “Por impresor, según la ley, su espíritu, y
la razón, se entiende el encargado de un establecimiento tipográfico, que corre con las impresiones que se
encomienda, y tiene que ver en lo relativo a ellas. Es decir, se entiende por impresor el administrador de
una imprenta. Yo no soy administrador del del establecimiento tipográfico en que se imprime el periódico
titulado "el Monitor": luego no soy el impresor de qué habla la ley.”
deduces from his argumentations that he is not author, nor publisher, nor printer."^{47}

Alamán disagreed and argued that a printer, “in the legal sense, is here he who gives his name in the imprint that is judged, and not the mechanic who composes and stamps, because this [individual] can be replaced by mere machines instead of men.”^{48} Although the statesman used the 1846 press laws to define his offender unequivocally as a printer who had violated the law, the case stalled and García Torres gained release within a few months. While García Torres denied responsibility for wrongdoing, the close connection between newspaper content and their printer-owners suggested claims of disinterestedness were disingenuous. Indeed, one of Mariano Riva Palacio’s correspondents lamented that, due to García Torres’s imprisonment, “[El Monitor] is going worse than usual,” without anyone to impose “order” among the editorial staff.^{49}

**Marketing Historical Fiction for Contemporary Times**

On May 1 of 1850, a prospectus sent to subscribers of Ignacio Cumplido’s newspaper *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* announced the publication of the novel *The Mysteries of the Inquisition*.^{50} Beginning with a lofty exposition condemning the Inquisition

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^{47} Ibid. “con la ayuda del Diccionario y de la mas inflexible forma silogistica, deduce de sus argumentaciones que no es autor, ni editor, ni impresor”

^{48} Ibid. He also dismissed García Torres’s argument that the administrator bore responsibility, calling this figure “a name unknown in the regulatory laws of the press, which make no such distinction and similarly causes him to be a blind agent, that perhaps without examining the content, orders or allows to be printed whatever the director orders.” / “Evidente es de todo punto, que el impresor en el sentido legal, es aquí el que asienta su nombre y apelativo en el impreso que se califica, y no el mecánico que compone y estampa, porque esto se puede suplir por meras máquinas en lugar del hombre, ni tampoco lo es el administrador, como nombre desconocido en las leyes reglamentarias de imprenta, que tal distincion no espresan, y por la misma causa de ser un agente ciego, que tal vez sin escámen del contenido, manda o deja imprimir lo que su principal le ordena.”

^{49} Benson Library, Mariano Riva Palacio Collection, D. Revilla to Riva Palacio, December 4, 1849, #3539.

^{50} I have been unable to locate original copies of the prospectus, but its circulation is mentioned in *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, May 28, 1850, and the prospectus’ text is reprinted in *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, June 19, 1850.
(established to serve the corrupting powers of monarchy), the text charted a march of progress as peoples gradually rid themselves of its tyranny, obtaining “political and civil liberty, liberty of conscious, so aligned with the most holy principles of Christianity.”

Revealing a politically liberal outlook over the role of the church in Mexican affairs, the prospectus explained that “the history of the Inquisition is not in the current day a purely speculative entertainment, but rather of the highest importance for those peoples who wish to conserve their liberty.”

Sliding into sales mode, the text then adopted the first person plural tense to offer readers the *Mysteries of the Inquisition*. “We have thought it most useful to publish the work of Mr. de Féreal ... because it, through the seductive form of the novel, so esteemed today, with a florid and elegant style,” revealed all the horrors visited upon sixteenth century Spain by that institution.

The unattributed narrative “we” of the prospectus text spoke authoritatively as it extolled the novel’s selling points. Yet this “we,” however, named another, more important authority—the “publisher”—whom it identified as the mastermind behind *The Mysteries*’ release.

Although the publisher in question was obviously Cumplido, the prospectus avoided direct attribution and actively exploited the passive voice, reflecting a general ambiguity in the way literary works were presented for public consumption at mid-

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51 May 1 prospectus reprinted as “Misterios de la Inquisición,” *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, June 19, 1850. “la libertad política y civil, la libertad de conciencia, tan conforme con los principios mas santos del cristianismo.”
52 Ibid., 2. “el estudio de la historia de la Inquisición no sea en el día un entretenimiento puramente especulativo, sino de la mas alta importancia para los pueblos que quieran conservar su libertad”
53 Ibid. “Hemos creído de la mayor utilidad publicar la obra de Mr. de Féreal, [...] porque en ella, bajo la forma seductora de la novela, tan estimada hoy, con un estilo florido y elegante.”
century. This editorial voice, a close reading of mid-century paratexts reveals, did not follow a single literary convention and was complicated by the fact that individuals like Cumplido inhabited a gray area of literary production, especially given that much content was imported and translated from far-away authors. Adding complexity, publishers’ notices often appeared in newspapers owned by printers. Editorial statements thus frequently appeared with newspaper conventions that tried to parse out different roles, using the “we” of the newspaper board to elegize the “he” of the publisher, heaping praise and defining the importance of this figure. In a private letter, Cumplido suggested that such conventions were all artifice: “You will have seen my opinion externalized in El Siglo,” he remarked to a friend, suggesting the degree to which he retained control over newspaper content. Nevertheless, editorial writings actively worked to erect discursive divisions between various printshop labors, out of which the publisher hopefully emerged as the supreme figure, unscathed by associations with the inky side of the trade and the messy politics of the newspaper business.

Beyond the printshop, printers often donned the cap of “publisher” as a marketing tactic when selling their wares to potential audiences. Publishers, unlike printers, might speak freely on a wide range of intellectual topics, offering their opinions and shaping

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54 An intellectual property law had been passed in 1846, however, which protected Mexican printers whose reprinting efforts contributed to the nation’s development, especially if editions of a work published abroad were not available locally. Martha Celis de la Cruz, “La propiedad literaria: el caso Carlos Nebel contra Vicente García Torres (1840),” in Empresa y cultura en tinta y papel: 1800-1860, ed. Laura Suárez de la Torre and Miguel Angel Castro (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José Maria Luis Mora / Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2001), 489-504.

55 Cumplido to León Ortigosa, August 12, 1848. “Ya habrá usted visto en el Siglo, externada mi opinión...” In Cárdenas Iglesias and Peña Guajardo, Correspondencia de Ignacio Cumplido.
readers’ experiences. This freedom offered commercial, but also social benefits: the publisher’s persona offered an identity that could transcend the local specificities of print production, that might separate printers from the suspicions and denigrating definitions imposed in the course of private conversations or publicized political persecution. It offered the chance for printers to develop a public persona based on something other than the patron-client relationships that defined their connections to the city’s elite residents.

The *Mysteries*’ prospectus highlighted its publisher’s many promises to his readers—a three month turnaround; weekly payment plans; beautiful typography, binding, and illustrations (“those extremely fine engravings that adorn modern publications”); first rate imported materials (“printed absolutely with new type, on French paper, with English ink, all first class materials brought in so that the work unites the greatest beauty with a scrupulous edition”)—in sum over five hundred pages for seven and a half pesos.⁵⁶ Defending against the raised eyebrows of potential readers concerned with moral uprightness, subsequent notices in *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* highlighted the novel’s qualities even as it underscored that it “in no way attacks religion and piety.”⁵⁷

“Exquisite engravings that are now property of the publisher, and entirely equal to those

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⁵⁶ Not all readers received this sumptuous pitch, however. While regular subscribers to *El Siglo* knew of the publication from the freebie prospectus, occasional readers (including those who could not afford an advance-payment subscription) learned of the forthcoming edition a month later, in a back-page announcement in the newspaper’s May 28 edition. This announcement itself highlighted the special access to publishing novelties provided first to subscribers, marking difference within the newspaper’s own readership. “Misterios de la Inquisición,” *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, June 19, 1840, 2. “Estos finísimos grabados que adornan las publicaciones modernas;” “Absolutamente impresa con tipos nuevos, sobre papel frances, con tinta inglesa, materials todos de primera clase traídos para que la obra reúna la mayor belleza a una corrección escrupulosa.”

⁵⁷ “Misterios de la Inquisición,” *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, May 28, 1850. “sin que en manera alguna se ataquen la religión y la piedad.”
of the original French [edition],” the copy explained, enhanced the novel’s “intrinsic
merit,” which lay in its “exact and interesting, as well as entertaining and judicious
picture of the acts of that tribunal of the Holy Office.” Written again through the first
person plural voice of the newspaper’s editorial staff, the announcement distanced the
paper from the editorial labors of Cumplido (whose real name remained unannounced
behind the moniker “publisher”). Lamenting that the newspaper would be unable to
reprint the beautiful engravings in question, it tempted readers to become subscribers to

Aware of the text’s potential to generate controversy—its title evoked not only its
explosive thematic content but also Eúgene Sue’s Mysteries of Paris, which had caused
controversy in Mexico City after its translation and publication in 1845—the publisher
cautiously presented the novel as a tool for understanding the course of historical
events. The first challenge to Mysteries of the Inquisition came not from critics,
however, but from editorial competition. On June 12, while Cumplido was still rounding
up subscriptions, Vicente García Torres’s newspaper El Monitor Republicano issued its
first installment of the novel, along with an introduction explaining the motivation.

Concurring that the edition offered “true usefulness for the entire world,” the
announcing article nevertheless criticized El Siglo’s issue “at an excessive price,” at

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58 Ibid. “El mérito intrínseco de esa obra va á ser realzado, en la edicion mexicana, con los esquisitos
grabados que son ahora propiedad del editor, y enteramente iguales á los del original francés.” “se hace una
pintura tan exacta é interesante, como entretenida y juiciosa de los actos de ese tribunal del Santo Oficio.”
59 On press debates over the Mysteries of Paris, see Javier Rodríguez Piña, "Los conservadores-católicos
mexicanos ante Los Misterios de París de Eugenio Sue," in Tras las huellas de Eugenio Sue: Lectura,
circulación y apropiación de Los misterios de París. Siglo XIX, ed. Laura Suárez de la Torre (Mexico City:
Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2015), 202-220.
which “very few people could acquire it.” Unlike El Siglo, which withheld the novel from its readers by publishing in book form, El Monitor promised to publish the text first in its newspaper, to be followed by an edition with “all the engravings from the French edition, in spite of which the work will cost not even half of the price announced in [Cumplido’s] subscription.” Emphasizing that the novel received European acclaim for the “beauty of the style and images,” as well as the “energy with which the mysterious crimes committed in the name of religion are revealed,” the article fused appreciation for literary content (defined as the revelation of truth) with illustrations and presentation.

Unlike in El Siglo’s announcement, El Monitor made no clear distinction between publisher and newspaper: indeed, El Monitor’s editorial “we” explained that the novel had “arrived to our hands,” downplaying the importance of individual agency in the publication process.

Brushing off El Monitor’s theft of the edition, El Siglo admonished readers in a small back page notice that, “this publication is distinct from the bad Spanish translation being inserted in a newspaper in this capitol.” Emphasizing the high quality paper of Cumplido’s edition, the announcement warned, “there is no one in the Republic who has the extremely fine engravings that the publisher has offered.” In reality, not even

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60 “Misterios de la Inquisición,” El Monitor Republicano, June 12, 1850. “á un precio escusivo, muy pocas personas podrían adquirirla.”
61 Ibid. “tendrán todos los grabados de la edición francesa, sin que por eso la obra cueste ni siquiera la mitad del precio anunciado para la suscripción.”
62 Ibid. “tanto por la belleza del estilo y las imágenes, como por la energía con que están revelados esos misteriosos crímenes que se cometían en nombre de la religión.”
63 Ibid. “Habiendo llegado a nuestras manos.”
64 “Misterios de la Inquisición,” El Siglo Diez y Nueve, June 14, 1850.
65 Ibid, “que no hay en la república quien tenga los finísimos grabados que el editor ha ofrecido.”
Cumplido had the engravings in question; he had, rather, somehow acquired reproductions of the engravings—perhaps on his European grand tour—whose quality would pale in comparison to the originals printed in Paris. Mexico City residents would likely have been unable to make this judgment, but an illustrated novel produced on Mexican soil was indeed a novelty: only two novels had been printed locally in 1849.66

The editorial spat, which highlighted differences in price, aesthetic quality and textual accuracy, revealed the rubrics against which literary works were to be judged, as well as the tensions generated by Mexico’s position as a frequent importer of literary content. While *El Siglo* targeted the high-end market only, *El Monitor*, exploited the potential for reaching multiple readerships by offering the novel not only as a bound volume but also in serial form. Both, however, rested on a valorization of foreign imports (both in raw materials and artistic and literary creations) and the material properties of the book-as-object (whether affordable or rare), two characteristics that connected book ownership and status. By re-printing the novel in Mexico City, the publisher facilitated the transfer between international goods and local consumers.

Cumplido had made similar assertions earlier in his career, when he explained in paratexts the lengths to which he had gone to bring new technologies and novelties to Mexican audiences. In the introduction to his 1839 calendar, for example, Cumplido explained that he had just visited the United States “not only with the goal of acquiring

66 Several books of poetry were also printed that year, along with historical and political works. This figure is an estimate based on Guadalupe Curiel, Miguel Angel Castro, and Alejandro Garcia, *Obras monográficas mexicanas del siglo XIX en la Biblioteca Nacional de México: 1822-1900* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1997).
greater knowledge in my profession as printer, but also to stock up on the best supplies of this art with the goal of being able, on my return to Mexico, to make luxury editions as beautiful as those from Europe.”67 With the United States as a source of technological innovation and Europe as a model for publishing aesthetics, Cumplido posited himself as a gatekeeper for Mexican audiences, but also lamented how blockades (related to the French occupation at Veracruz) stymied his efforts to fully deliver on promises. The following year, however, Cumplido bragged that “this Calendar of 1840 is the first typographic work that has been printed in the Mexican Republic on a press of new invention,” whose mechanism reduced the number of necessary printers from two to one.68

If Cumplido and García Torres highlighted the benefits they brought to Mexican audiences by acting as international importers, this attribute soon became a liability, as what began as an editorial dispute shifted to a political issue with greater newspaper coverage. Cumplido and García Torres’s positions celebrated cosmopolitan linkages, yet nativist critiques questioned whether such ties were salutary. Three days after the first installment of the Mysteries appeared, the conservative daily El Universal, operated by

67 Ignacio Cumplido, “Al público mexicalo,” in Cuarto calendario portátil de I. Cumplido, para el año de 1839. Arreglado al meridiano de México (Mexico City: Impreso por el Propietario, en la oficina de la calle de los Rebeldes Num. 2, 1839). “Me decidí en principios de este año a pasar personalmente a los Estados Unidos del Norte, no solo con el objeto de adquirir mas conocimientos en mi profesión de impresor, sino también para surtirme de los mejores útiles de este arte a fin de poder hacer, a mi regreso a México, ediciones de lujo tan bellas como las europeas.”

68 “Introducción,” in Quinto calendario portátil de Ignacio Cumplido, para el año bisiesto de 1840. Arreglado al meridiano de México (Mexico City: Impreso por el Propietario, en la calle de los Rebeldes Num. 2, 1840). “Este Calendario de 1840 es la primera obra tipográfica que se ha impreso en la república mexicana en una prensa de nueva invención.”
Rafael Rafael, attacked the novel in a front-page article, calling its author “impious as well as fantastical and ignorant.” Arguing that such scandalous novels had caused Europe’s fortunes to decline since their advent in the eighteenth century, *El Universal* denounced both *El Siglo* and *El Monitor* for bringing similar threats to Mexico. Imported goods, the newspaper implied, posed grave dangers to local, as yet insulated audiences.

Much like the two publishers, *El Universal* highlighted the contemporary implications of the novel, although it refused to offer any literary critique: “the literary question is in any case insignificant, next to the grave social questions involved in the publication of this work.” While *El Siglo* and *El Monitor* had proposed that the novel would remind readers of a long history of church abuses and thus help them reflect on the role of the contemporary church, *El Universal* stated that “the true object of the work is no other than making Catholicism odious [...] and making apology for and praise of Protestantism.”

In the days following the novel’s first publication, a three-way polemic emerged as the two liberal publishers struggled to maintain focus on the literary and material merits of the book. Contesting an outside appraisal that suggested Cumplido’s edition would be the better copy, *El Monitor* championed García Torres’s version, explaining

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70 Ibid. “La cuestión literaria es de todo punto insignificante, al lado de las graves cuestiones sociales que entraña la publicación de esta obra.”

71 Ibid. “El objeto verdadero de la obra no es otro que el de hacer odioso el catolicismo [...] y hacer la apologia y el encomio del protestantismo”
that his would “bear the same etchings as the edition made in the United States.”\textsuperscript{72} Furthermore, their translations would be the same, both being taken from the New Orleans \textit{Patria}. As proof of their sameness, the article alleged that Cumplido had pillaged his prospectus word-for-word from the \textit{Patria’s} copy. All things equal, García Torres’s economical offering should naturally carry the day. This article set the terms of the battle as a clash between two publishers, finally named directly and positioned in explicit competition.

Two days later, \textit{El Siglo} responded to both \textit{El Monitor} and \textit{El Universal} (which now accused \textit{El Siglo} of profiting from moral corruption). Berating \textit{El Monitor} for yet another editorial theft—they cited similar scooping of Dumas’ \textit{The Queen’s Necklace} and Lamartine’s \textit{History of the Revolution}—the article emphasized the differences between the two editions.\textsuperscript{73} García Torres now claimed to possess the U.S. illustrations, but Cumplido had the original and superior French plates. The translation was not the same as the New Orleans’ edition, nor was the prospectus lifted from that city’s \textit{Patria} but rather composed in Mexico. Responding to García Torres’s claim of lower prices, the article explained that “cheapness is relative, and results in this case from the difference in merits of the editions and from the expenses involved: scant for one, numerous for the

\textsuperscript{72} “Los misterios de la inquisición.” \textit{El Monitor Republicano}, June 17, 1850. “llevará los mismos grabados que tiene la edición que se hizo en los Estados Unidos.”

\textsuperscript{73} “Los misterios de la inquisición.” \textit{El Siglo Diez y Nueve}, June 19, 1850. Competition between the newspapers had occurred before. Rodríguez Piña, "Los conservadores-católicos mexicanos ante \textit{Los Misterios de París de Eugenio Sue}.”
other.”

The article even suggested that Cumplido would have collaborated with García Torres: if the former had known the latter would steal his edition, he would have offered to sell him the French engravings and renounced the edition altogether.

To *El Universal*, the article condescendingly defended its newspaper’s independence in the midst of the polemic: “no, dear brothers, it is not the *Siglo XIX*, but its publisher, who will make the edition; the newspaper has nothing to do with it, as it has nothing to do with the other imprints, whether their color be religious, political or moral, that come to light in the same printshop as said newspaper.”

Lambasting *El Universal* as a foreign-launched “mercantile speculation,” it countered that if the editor Cumplido were only interested in his own personal interests, he would welcome *El Universal’s* critique, as it “has excessively raised the number of [the novel’s] subscribers.”

In the coming days, although *El Monitor* had continued publishing the novel’s installments, *El Siglo* and *El Universal* increasingly took up the battle between themselves, suggesting that hostile relations between the newspapers’ respective owners may have influenced the nature of the evolving polemic.

Seizing on the slippage in terminology used when discussing the novel in newspaper articles, *El Universal* contested *El Siglo’s* impartiality and authority. Performing a textual analysis of *El
Monitor’s critique, El Universal picked apart contradictory phrases to reveal what was clearly evident: that the publisher of the Mysteries and the publisher of El Siglo Diez y Nueve were not separate entities, but one and the same: Mr. Cumplido. “Our dear brothers erred completely, when they claimed that their newspaper has nothing to do with the reprinting of the Mysteries,” continued El Universal with sarcastic italics. “What!” the article exclaimed with incredulity, “Don’t they remember that their newspaper recommended that illustrious work by Féréal, as proper for shaping the heart of even the most chaste maiden, given that it is worthy, very worthy of occupying the attention of god-fearing persons?” Here, El Universal erased the discursive distance constructed in El Siglo between publisher and newspaper, simultaneously undermining the authority of both sources with accusations of selfish interest.

Turning around El Siglo’s accusations of mercantile speculation, El Universal asked whether the Mysteries—“with its storied prospectus, its frills and vignettes, its paper fabricated ad hoc in France, its type founded also ad hoc in Great Britain, and its chiaroscuro ink”—wasn’t itself a “mercantile speculation.” Highlighting the material qualities so vociferously championed by its advertisers, El Universal re-signified good taste as petty commercialism. Furthermore, the article challenged El Siglo to prove that

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78 “El Siglo XIX y los ‘Misterios de la Inquisición’” El Universal, June 2, 1850. “nuestros caros hermanos se equivocan de medio á medio, cuando asientan que su periódico nada tiene que ver con la reimpresion de los Misterios. ¡Cómo! [...] ¡qué! No recuerdan que su periódico recomendó aquella obra insigne de Fereal, como una leyenda edificante, propia para formar el corazón aun de la más púdica doncella, puesto que es digna y muy digna de ocupar la atención de las personas timoratas?”

79 Ibid. “con su historiado prospecto, con sus muñecos y viñetas, con su papel fabricado ad hoc en Francia, con sus tipos fundidos también ad hoc en la Gran Bretaña, con su tinta claro-obscura, [...] son ó nó una especulación mercantil.”
the novel was not an amoral work, urging them to “stain, if you dare, your columns, as El Monitor has stained its own, with chapters 4 and 5.”

By the end of June, Cumplido relented on the editorial front, perhaps dissuaded by El Universal’s biting conservative critique and the headaches he foresaw for the future. In an article on the back page of his newspaper, Cumplido announced that he had relinquished the publication of The Mysteries to García Torres, selling him the French illustrations and ending his plans to print the novel. Cumplido also relented on a discursive front, giving up his identity as the novel’s publisher and taking up the identity as publisher of El Siglo, a role previously disavowed in the heat of the polemic. By selling the illustrations to García Torres—most likely in a backroom deal brokered after the polemic intensified, although potentially engineered in advance, given his earlier mention of possible sale—Cumplido seemed to admit that the acrobatics of self-definition and compartmentalization of printshop roles had failed. El Universal certainly gloated over its victory, while El Monitor dramatically slowed down its formerly daily serial publication schedule, recalibrating to align the newspaper version with the installments of the book version, which began to emerge in July.

Far from over, however, the polemic re-intensified once El Siglo became freed of its commercial interests and therefore better equipped to make purely ideological arguments. From this point on, El Siglo and El Universal talked past each other, with the

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80 Ibid. “Manchad, si os atreveis, vuestras columnas como las ha manchado el Monitor, con los capítulos 4o y 5o.”
former emphasizing freedom of the press, and the latter decrying the moral perfidy of the novel and calling for its censorship on religious grounds. Freed from its editorial obligation to defend the work itself, *El Siglo* shifted the terms of debate away from *The Mysteries*’ moral qualities altogether, and argued that *El Universal* increasingly appeared to be advocating for the book’s censorship.\(^{82}\)

Simultaneously, *El Siglo* took up *El Universal*’s own tactics, accusing it of “publishing voluntarily and --\>ONLY TO EARN MONEY\<-- the newspapers of the [U.S.] invaders” during the occupation of Mexico City in 1847.\(^{83}\) Digging up events from the recent past to discredit its rival, it lambasted *El Universal*, “from whose printshop emerged [...] newspapers that daily insulted a defeated nation, vilifying our religious beliefs and humiliating the clergy, of whom the editors of the *Universal* today show themselves fervent defenders because it serves their current speculation.”\(^{84}\) Other articles accused the foreign editorial staff (Rafael was, after all, a Spanish émigré) of patronizing Mexican audiences, who “do not need anyone’s advice to judge good and bad.”\(^{85}\) By this point, ideological principles and personal politics were thoroughly entangled, as adversaries attempted to peg abstract editorial personae to the individuals who operated behind them in a bid to discredit ideas and individuals simultaneously.

\(^{82}\) “Mala fē y charlatanería del Universal,” *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, July 10, 1850.

\(^{83}\) “Despique de los Loretos,” *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, July 3, 1850. “Publicar voluntariamente y (pointing hand) SOLO POR GANAR DINERO (pointing hand) los periódicos de los invasores”

\(^{84}\) Ibid, “de cuya imprenta salían en tiempo de la ocupación de la capital por los americanos, los periódicos que insultaban diariamente á una nacion vencida, vilipendiando nuestras creencias religiosas, y vejando al clero del cual los redactores del Universal se muestran hoy acérrimos defensores porque así conviene á su especulación actual.”

\(^{85}\) “Los Misterios de la Inquisición y el Universal,” July 13, 1850. “para juzgar de lo bueno y lo malo no necesitan los consejos de nadie.”
Divine Intervention: Censoring the “Mysteries” in a Post-Inquisition Landscape

As the polemic stretched across the summer months, El Monitor prepared for the release of the book’s first installments by ramping up its coverage of the novel’s good qualities, re-staging the book’s defense in narrower terms. Rather than casting it as a work from which useful lessons could be drawn for the present, El Monitor pitched Los Misterios as a historical tome whose purpose was to analyze past events and educate the masses on a time far removed, “so that light-hearted souls might have incentive to study and learn about an epoch of history.”86 Emphasizing the fact that the Inquisition had been definitively dismantled and thus firmly relegated to a resolved past, it sought to neutralize the novel’s obvious contemporary political valences.

El Monitor’s change in tone likely responded to insider information that suggested problems ahead: the following day, the vicario capitular (an administrator) of the Archdiocese of Mexico City, José María Barrientos, issued an internal circular decrying the spread of immoral materials, especially writings that had already been banned in Europe.87 While El Monitor continued publishing the novel in its columns, the church’s public response coincided closely with the release of the first installments of its book form. Its response came forcefully: in a decree, published on September 5 on a power-blue broadside, the Archbishopric of Mexico City banned the Mysteries for being “openly protestant in its doctrines and tendencies,” immoral, and libelous against the

86 “Misterios de la Inquisición,” El Monitor Republicano, July 18, 1850. “para que las almas ligeras tuviesen un atractivo para estudiar y conocer una época de la historia.”
87 García Ugarte, Poder político y religioso: México siglo XIX, 1, 349.
Catholic Church, its saints, and ministers, and threatened any readers or owners with excommunication.\textsuperscript{88} Going further, the vicario capitular Barrientos wrote a week later to the Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs, and, appealing to the “Catholic sentiments” of the president, requested that the government “take all the measures within its means, with the object of impeding the introduction of these works in our ports, and their reprinting and circulation with the Republic.”\textsuperscript{89}

Upon first glance, the vicario capitular’s request conformed to the laws governing the relationship between church and state authorities over the regulation of printed materials. Although the power of church officials was curtailed with the suppression of the Mexican Inquisition in 1820 and independence, legislation from the Cortes de Cádiz and Archbishop of Toledo, ratified after Mexico’s independence, affirmed that the church retained the right to censor all religious materials.\textsuperscript{90} Furthermore, these rules required civil judges to execute orders of religious censorship, including seizing offensive materials from bookstores and printshops.

Although the law upheld church authority over all religious matters on paper, the actual dynamics of church-state interactions over censorship were more complex.\textsuperscript{91} While

\textsuperscript{88} AGN, Gobernación, s/s caja 378, exp. 1. Decree dated September 5, 1850.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid. “se sirva dictar todas las providencias de su resorte, con el objeto de que se impida la introducción de esas obras en nuestros puertos, y su reimpresión y circulación dentro de la República.”
\textsuperscript{90} Article 29 in the “Instrucciones que debe observarse en el Arzobispado de Toledo, para la censura y juicio religioso de los libros y proposiciones que sean dignos de sujetarse a ella, según las disposiciones conciliares, bulas pontificias y leyes de Cortes, a consecuencia de la abolición del tribunal de la Inquisición.” Reprinted in Disposiciones legales y otros documentos relativos a la prohibición de impresos por la autoridad eclesiástica, mandados publicar de orden del Supremo Gobierno, (Mexico City: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1850), 111.
\textsuperscript{91} For an analysis of church efforts to shape reading practices through exhortation and persuasion in a post-Inquisition landscape, see Anne Staples, "La lectura y los lectores en los primeros años de vida..."
few relevant archival sources survived the nationalization of church property that broke up Mexico City’s religious archives after passage of Reform legislation (La Reforma), those that do speak to an institution wrestling with how best to carry out its censorship functions without the weight of the Inquisition. A religious censorship board (Junta Eclesiástica de Censura), responsible for overseeing these functions, operated sporadically during the first half of the nineteenth century: active throughout the 1830s but suspended under the tenure of Archbishop Manuel Posada y Garduño (1839-1846), it was reinitiated in 1849 through agreement with the Herrera administration. From the surviving documentation, the Junta de Censura of the Archdiocese of Mexico City appears to have concerned itself most commonly with censoring religious works submitted for pre-publication approval by authors and publishers.

A lone case of censorship from 1836 reveals that church officials had previously coordinated with civil judges to track down the authors of censored texts (in this case, a heretical turn of phrase in an otherwise secular-themed article in El Cosmopolita). In this case, however, civil enthusiasm died out in the face of printer resistance, leaving church


92 As early as 1822, for example, a priest expressed doubts about how best to censor the prohibited books in the private library of then General (and later President) Manuel Gómez Pedraza. I owe this reference to Marco Antonio Pérez Iturbe. Berenise Bravo Rubio and Marco Antonio Pérez Iturbe, "Una iglesia en busca de su independencia: el clero secular del arzobispado de México, 1803-1822" (Licenciatura thesis, UNAM, Campus Acatlán, 2001).

93 This practice, followed under Inquisition protocol, continued throughout the entire nineteenth century. A small cache of requests for censorship exists in the Archivo Histórico del Arzobispado de México (AHAM). Although the scope of church censorship is beyond the present study, officials tended to deny approval in many cases, even when individuals expressed desires to promote the Catholic faith, due to manuscripts’ incorrect expressions of doctrine. See, for example AHAM, Labastida Database, caja 26, exp. 18; caja 37, exp. 86; caja 70, exp. 22; caja 81, exp. 31.

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officials to confront the matter on their own. While likely that newspaper articles and other imprints occasionally warranted investigation, the case of the *Mysteries*’ censorship may represent the first in a series of attempts (represented by a group of church bans emitted between 1850 and 1852) by the archbishopric to reassert its influence at center stage, through public prohibition, rather than behind closed doors through pre-publication censorship.

Although the original internal church paperwork has been lost for the *Mysteries* case, a published copy of the censor Dr. José María Diez de Sollano’s report and documentation from other cases suggests that the church moved at a speed altogether at odds with the rapid-fire response time of newspaper polemics, having officially initiated the censorship process at some point in July, nearly two months after debates had started in the press. Once church officials submitted an item—in this instance an issue of *El..."

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94 In this September 1836 case, the administrator Teodoro Vásquez at the offending printshop reported to officials that he had just taken over the job from his predecessor, Agustín R. y Castillo, and thus did not have the responsibility papers for the article’s author. The officials visited the previous administrator, then in prison, who pointed the finger back at the first printer, Vásquez. Vásquez subsequently fingered José María Solis, from whom he had received the keys to the printshop on assuming his post. The officials searched Solis’ house but found no responsibility papers, which led the judge to wash his hands of the case and send the paperwork back to church officials. Church officials then pursued the matter independently, but after several months of attempts, failed to convince Agustín R. y Castillo to show up for questioning, and eventually dropped the matter. AGN, Bienes Nacionales, caja 1139, exp. 11.

95 In addition to the lone 1836 case described above and a fragmentary transcription of the *Junta*’s minutes from 1831, I have located seven cases of censorship from the Archbishopric of Mexico City, all dating between October 1850 and April 1852, in the AGN and AHAM. While this cache may be a feature of the fragmented archive, it might represent a particularly dense moment of activity, which would make sense given that the *Junta* was reestablished in 1849. The end date of 1852 also corresponds roughly to the final ascendancy to power of General Antonio López de Santa Anna, during what is widely considered to have been a dictatorship, when restrictions on freedom of the press were particularly effective via passage of the Lares Law, which required printers and editors to make deposits with the government against future potential abuses of freedom of the press. See 1851-1852 cases in AGN, Bienes Nacionales, caja 732, exps. 15, 19, 21, 22; caja 1139, exps. 11-12; and AHAM, Base Siglo XIX, caja 85, exps. 20-21.

96 Diez de Sollano, *Dictamen que el doctor Don José María Diez de Sollano.*
Monitor and a copy of the New Orleans edition of the novel—for review to the Junta de Censura, the board assembled and assigned a censor to prepare a written report on the items. Because García Torres had not submitted the novel for pre-publication censorship and as of August it had not been fully published in Mexico, the censor reviewed an 1846 New Orleans edition—the same text used in the Mexico City edition—which had somehow been acquired locally. In general, a censor could take anywhere from a week to several months to formulate a response, which would then be approved or modified by the Junta. In the case of the Mysteries, Sollano apologized to the Junta for a month’s delay but justified it based on his other occupations, the novel’s length, and the complexity of the points touched upon in his report.

Sollano’s lengthy report lambasted the novel—in customarily indignant fashion—as “pernicious and full of venom” and argued it “breathed Protestantism all over” in challenging the holiness of catholic saints like the Inquisitor Pedro Arbues (the novel’s main villain). Lamenting that such works could erase the “study of centuries” and darken Mexico’s uncertain future, he laid the blame squarely on “the implacable determination of certain journalists in propagating such writings,” combined with the “acquiescence, or at least weakness of the remaining Mexicans to oppose and hurl [them] with indignation to the filthy mud that these productions deserve.” After ratifying the

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97 Ibid., 4.
98 See, for example, AHAM, Base Siglo XIX final, caja 85, exps. 20-21.
99 Díez de Sollano, Dictamen que el doctor Don José María Díez de Sollano, 3.
100 Ibid., 58; 46. “perniciosos y lleno de veneno;” “respira protestantismo por todas partes.”
101 Ibid., 43. “el empeño implacable de ciertos periodistas en la propagación de tales escritos, y la aquiescencia, o al menos flojedad de los demás mexicanos para contrarestar y arrojar con indignación al inmundo cieno que merecen tales producciones!”
censor’s decision, the Junta passed its recommendation to the vicario capitular, who emitted the distinctive powder-blue edict bearing the Junta’s decision, to be disseminated publically.  

**Contesting Church Authority in Private and Public: Businessman vs. Crusading Publisher**

Getting wind of the Archbishop’s prohibition, Vicente García Torres penned an urgent letter to the government, contesting the vicario capitular’s prohibition of the *Mysteries*, a “work that is being published by subscription in my typographic establishment.” Appealing to the authority of the state, he argued that the church edict “contains an attack on the current [laws] on freedom of the press,” which can only be upheld by civil authorities. “The ecclesiastical authority must subject itself to the political and civil laws,” he continued, explaining that “to prohibit the reading and retention of an imprint is to attack freedom of the press and the right of property, guaranteed by our laws.” Quoting press legislation, García Torres underscored that only government judges were authorized to mete out punishment in contests regarding the press, and suggested that the Archbishopric “attacks with its edict the Constitution of the State.”

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102 For another example of a printed church ban that used the same powder-blue format, see that emitted in 1850 against Abraham López’s Calendar. AHDF, Ayuntamiento, Justicia, Jurados de Imprenta, vol. 2740, exp. 34.

103 *Disposiciones legales*, 9. “La obra que se está publicando por suscripción en mi establecimiento tipográfico.”

104 Ibid. “contiene un ataque a las [leyes] vigentes sobre libertad de imprenta”

105 Ibid., 10. “La autoridad eclesiástica tiene que sujetarse a las leyes políticas y civiles”; “Prohibir la lectura y retención de un impreso es atacar la libertad de imprenta y el derecho de propiedad, garantizado por nuestras leyes.”

106 Ibid., 11. “Ataca con su edicto a la Constitución del Estado.”
Although displaying a clearly combative attitude towards church actions, García Torres also offered a conciliatory argument to bolster his appeal, grounded in the realities of print circulation. “It will happen,” he predicted, “that the work continues circulating, that it be requested more, that it will not be returned by various subscribers.” As a result of this scandal-driven curiosity, “excommunication will be looked upon with scorn. Grave is this evil and very worthy of being avoided.”

Here, García Torres cleverly suggests that a strict separation of church and state—with clearly defined responsibilities for policing print—was necessary for the maintenance of religious authority. Backing down from his forceful condemnation of church actions, García Torres proceeded to defend the *Mysteries,* using similar arguments to those developed in the pages of the rival newspaper *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* during its polemic with *El Universal.* In particular, García Torres explained how the novel circulated—without causing any problems—in other Catholic countries, and that its critique aimed not at religion, but at “the barbarous and perverse individuals who, profaning it, have aimed to make it a vile instrument of their passions.”

Signing off, García Torres firmly restated his initial proposal, that “whatever the work may be, its printing, circulation and retention is not under the authority of the Sr. Vicario Capitular,” and any further condemnation or absolution must come from judge and jury.

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107 Ibid. “antes bien sucederá que la obra siga circulando, que sea mas solicitada, que no sea devuelta por varios de sus suscritores, y que la escomunión sea vista con menosprecio. Grave es este mal y muy digno de evitarse.”

108 Ibid. “a los bárbaros y perversos que profanándola, han pretendido hacerla un vil instrumento de sus pasiones.”

109 Ibid. “sea lo que la obra fuere, no está su impresion, circulacion y retencion bajo la potestad del Sr. Vicario Capitular.”
García Torres’s letter reveals another facet of printer argumentation, in which the individual upholds state authority in the face of ecclesiastical abuse of power. The approach shares affinities with arguments launched by printers against government in the face of persecution by officials, in its appeal to the law as a fixed object that should be applied to the letter (especially when this would guarantee favorable outcomes for printers). On the surface, however, there is a noticeable absence of explicit printer definitions—like those deployed by Ignacio Cumplido in 1840—at work. In the letter, García Torres referred to himself, in passing, as owner of a typographical establishment. This choice distanced García Torres from the one potentially thorny issue at stake: the novel’s moral suitability. If he had assumed the moniker of publisher, García Torres might appear to have a closer connection to the novel’s contents, about which, he explained, “I do not pretend [...] to make a critical judgment.” Instead, García Torres linked himself to production, describing the printing process as still underway, and suggesting that church censorship violated his individual property rights without offering any indemnity. Here, the printer-as-businessman, emerged as the primary identity useful for contesting church action, in spite of its distasteful connotations in the newspaper polemic that swirled around the edition.

Meanwhile, García Torres began his own public campaign—on the same day he sent his appeal to the government—by releasing in El Monitor the first of two writings that would also appear as amendments to the published book edition. Introduced by an

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110 Ibid. “No pretendo, ni es esta la oportunidad, hacer un juicio crítico de la obra”
editorial that recognized and criticized the church edict ("we should reveal that this unfounded excommunication is the fruit of vengeance"), the "Critical Opinion of Los misterios de la inquisición" occupied over half of the September 11 edition.111

Unlike newspaper writings that used the editorial “we” to chart the edition’s progress and accuse the Archbishopric for taking revenge on recent critiques published in El Monitor, the “Critical Opinion” took the form of a third-party review, creating the illusion of impartiality and distance from the editorial staff. Although the anonymity of the author—"A Traveler"—may have raised readers’ eyebrows, the first person appraisal offered the opportunity to delve into delicate religious issues too sensitive to address through typical newspaper polemics. This included denouncing Mexico’s fanatical tendencies, which the author suggested impeded the nation’s enlightenment, and lambasting the Inquisition as one of the darkest stains on its history.

Explaining that he had worked for a year in Spanish archives researching decrees and documents related to the Inquisition’s tyranny, the Traveler commended the Mysteries as a “historical novel”: although it took license with names, places, and events, “nevertheless its stories, its dramas in nature and substance are all extremely exact."112

Having established expertise as a historian and frankness as a social commentator, the author liberally sprinkled praise for García Torres and his edition throughout the review. “Señor Don García Torres, with the reprinting of the novel of Mr. Fereal (sic),” he

111 "Un edicto,” El Monitor Republicano, September 11, 1850. “Nosotros debemos revelar que esta infundada escomunión es el fruto de la venganza.”
112 “Juicio crítico de los Misterios de la inquisición,” El Monitor Republicano, September 11, 1850. “sin embargo sus narracciones, sus dramas en su indole y sustancia son todos exactísimas.”
explained, “has leant a great service to our country, for which we can no less than give
him our congratulations, inviting him to continue the reprinting of other various
publications ... for the enlightenment of a nation where, as in ours, fanaticism has taken
such deep root.”

The “indefatigable” García Torres, he cooed, has “taken great pains in
the typographical part, beautifying it in addition to the care with which it is printed, with
a profusion of excellent etchings, made in Paris and acquired at augmented expense.”

In addition to “having taken a great step in our typography, combining a clear, compact,
edition filled with beautiful engravings, acquired at immense sacrifice, with the
cheapness indispensable for allowing ordinary members of our pueblo to acquire books
of this class,” he “has taken a great step in our civilization,” offering a work that “will
figure in all the libraries of curious and enlightened men.”

The over-the-top praise heaped upon García Torres suggests he or his
collaborators played an active role in composing the text of the “Critical Judgment,” but
also that third-party appraisals might convince audiences to look beyond the issue of
economic self interest and appreciate the crucial social function of the publisher: to bring
the literary materials of civilization and enlightenment to Mexico. Defending the moral

113 Ibid. “El Sr. D. Vicente García Torres, con la reimpresion de la obra de Mr. Fereal (sic), ha prestado un
gran servicio a nuestro pais, por lo cual no podemos menos de darle nuestros parabienes, invitándolo a que
continúe la reimpresion de otras varias publicaciones, ... para la ilustracion de un pueblo donde, como en el
nuestro, tan profundas raices ha echado el fanatismo.”
114 Ibid. “que se ha esmerado en la parte tipográfica, embelleciendola ademas del cuidado con que está
impresa, con profusion de escelentes grabados, hechos en Paris y cuya adquisicion le ha ocasionado
crecidos desembolsos.”
115 Ibid. “ha dado un gran paso en nuestra tipografía, combinando una edición clara, compacta y llena de
hermosos grabados, adquiridos a costa de inmensos sacrificios, con la baratura que es indispensable para
que el común de nuestro pueblo esté al alcance de poder adquirir libros de la clase del que se le acaba de
ofrecer”; “ha dado un gran paso en nuestra civilización”; “de figurar en todas la bibliotecas de los hombres
curiosos e ilustrados.”
importance of the novel as a weapon against fanaticism, the Traveler also emphasized its material qualities, further entwining editorial appreciations (of printing quality, illustrations, and economy) with García Torres’s persona as a principled crusader. By acquiring the reprinted French novel, the text suggested, readers could affirm their own place amongst the “curious and enlightened.”

**Church-State Confrontation: Mutually Assured Non-Compliance**

The Minister of Justice Marcelino Castañeda, meanwhile, speedily responded to García Torres’s businesslike letter, advising him to direct inquiries to the courts to pursue his rights. Castañeda reassured him, at the same time, that the government would not impede the novel’s circulation until the church had demonstrated that “the formulas established by the laws” had been properly followed.\(^{116}\) Castañeda, a minister with a positive reputation amongst the clergy, responded on the same day to the vicario capitular Barrientos, informing him that he had passed on the church’s request to the Ministry of the Interior, and requesting to know whether church officials had in fact observed the procedures delineated by press laws (article 2, chapter 2) and the instructions enumerated for following protocol established by the Archbishop of Toledo in 1821 (and ratified in Mexico in 1824).\(^ {117}\) In an apparently reassuring tone, he confirmed, “like you, the

\(^{116}\) *Disposiciones legales*, 12. “mientras no se observen las fórmulas establecidas por las leyes.”

\(^{117}\) Ibid., 8. On Castañeda’s reputation, see García Ugarte, *Poder político y religioso: México siglo XIX*, 1, 388.
government deplores the progress of immorality and the abuses of freedom of the press, and will endeavor to attack them by means that the laws put in its hands.”

A week later, the vicario capitular replied with a lengthy explanation. Of course, he reasoned, the Junta de Censura was and remained founded on the legal principles cited by the Minister of Justice. The only aspect of the law the Junta had failed to follow involved proceedings “in which the author or publisher of the work [in question] be heard.” Justifying this oversight, Barrientos first cited practical reasons. Calling together the Junta, awaiting the detailed report prepared by the appointed censor, and going through a possible appeals process took time: “meanwhile, the imprint or work had circulated all over, if its contents had not already been forgotten altogether.”

Meanwhile, retorting the Minister of Justice’s citation of legal precepts, Barrientos claimed that the “liberal governments and authorities” routinely failed to follow two important rules delineated in the 1821 instructions of the Archbishop of Toledo, namely title 1: “no book or treaty on religious matters can be printed without previous license from the ordinary” and article 3: “during censorship trials, the sale of the contracted books shall be suspended, given the great importance of the matter.” If the civil government failed to follow these rules because it felt they clashed with “the idol of

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118 Disposiciones legales, 8. “El gobierno deplora, como V.S., los progresos de la imoralidad y los abusos de la libertad de imprenta, y procurará atacarlos por los medios que las leyes ponen en sus manos.”
119 Ibid., 13. “en el que se oiga al autor o editor de la obra”
120 Ibid., 14. “mientras, el impreso u obra había circulado por todas partes, si no es que estaba ya hasta olvidado su contenido”
121 The ordinary (ordinario) was an ecclesiastical judge, responsible for dispensing church approval for publishing religious materials. Ibid., 15. “ningun libro o tratado sobre materias de Religion pueda imprimirse sin previa licencia del ordinario”; “durante los juicios de censura, se suspenda la venta de los libros á que se contrae, atendida la grande importancia de la materia.”
freedom of the press,” he continued, the church could hardly be expected to observe the
“extensive procedures of a formal trial, which would make its censorship and prohibition
illusory and even ridiculous.”

Laying down a tit-for-tat argument of noncompliance, Barrientos charted the
troubled history of church-state relations regarding censorship. The only prohibition ever
effected by the independent government of Mexico, he explained, occurred under the
empire of General Agustín Iturbide (1821-23). Thus, it was no surprise that Archbishop
Posada had done away with the Junta de Censura altogether: it was futile to rely on civil
authorities that refused to follow their own laws. Given the frustrating history of church
efforts to censor, the re-establishment of the Junta de Censura in 1849 represented an
attempt to re-assert religious authority in an era of hardening political divisions, taking
advantage of the general good will of a conciliatory presidential administration.

Yet the new Junta had already come up against state inaction on several
occasions. In February of 1850, Barrientos had similarly appealed to the Ministry of
Justice against an “impious article” published (similarly) in the Monitor Republicano, but
only received verbal placation. “I abstained from dictating its public prohibition,” he
explained, “considering that since some time had necessarily passed, it would only have
served to alarm the editors of the newspaper, without achieving that the article be
collected from subscribers, who perhaps would already have forgotten the news and

122 Ibid. “dilatados tramites de un formal juicio, que haría ilusorias y aun ridiculas su censura y
prohibición.”
would refuse to let their edition remain incomplete.” In a second instance that same year, the Vicario had appealed directly to a judge to impede the sale of Protestant works being sold by a vendor from the United States in “a very public place.” While the judge had written a legal statement to support the request, he had been too scared to carry out the order, and passed it instead to the city police, “from whom he and I have remained waiting for a reply, and we will wait for it until the end of the centuries.”

Church efforts to censor immoral works thus confronted, in Barrientos’ telling, not only state inaction but also active opposition from newspapers, local officials, and even well-heeled readers themselves, who would prefer to keep their copies of the newspaper complete rather than submit to religious authority by handing over prohibited issues. Facing such logistical hurdles, he explained, the church would have dropped the matter with The Mysteries altogether, had the editors not chosen to “reprint it in a separate luxury edition, that would fall into the hands of the most ignorant and incautious.”

The fact that The Mysteries’ editors had chosen to transform the serialized text into a book, however, went a step too far: arguing that the novel’s editors had interpreted church silence as tacit approval to proceed with printing a book edition, the church felt compelled to act. If its actions did not follow civil protocol to the letter,

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123 Ibid., 16. “me abstuve de dictar su pública prohibición, considerando que trascurrido necesariamente algún tiempo, solo se habría logrado alamar a los editores del periódico, sin lograr que se recogiese el artículo del poder de los suscritores, que ya tendrían acaso olvidadas las especies y rehusarían tal vez dejar incompleta su edición”
124 Ibid., 17. “de quien él y yo nos hemos quedado aguardando la respuesta, y la aguardaremos hasta el fin de los siglos”
125 Ibid., 16. “reimprimirla en separada lujosa edicion, que anduviese en manos de los mas ignorantes e incautos.”
Barrientos reasoned, the blame lay squarely with the state, which refused to hold up its end of the bargain. When the government observes the abovementioned articles, he explained, then “the ecclesiastical authority may also restrict itself justly to the civil provisions.”\textsuperscript{126}

Barrientos’ letter, while initially appearing to exculpate erroneous church behavior, soon staged an outright confrontation with the national government, even as he portrayed the church’s position as one of weakness. The Vicario Capitular’s frustrations revealed not only the practical difficulties of controlling the circulation of print materials in Mexico City—difficulties also shared by government officials, as explored in the previous chapter—but also a degree of mutual non-compliance between church and state in recognizing the limits of the others’ authority, masked under a shared rhetoric about the importance of following legal procedures. The church challenge to government failings, in fact, provoked the Minister of Justice to seek outside opinions, and two days after receiving its letter, he forwarded the case file to the Attorney General (\textit{fiscal}) of the Supreme Court for review.

\textit{Counter-censorship and Commerce: the Publisher Stages his Defense}

As the fiscal deliberated, García Torres’s printshop released another paratextual writing, the “Defense of the publisher of the work entitled \textit{Mysteries of the Inquisicion},” printed in \textit{El Monitor} in serial form across the entire month of October, and later included with the published book edition. Written anonymously, the article used the third person

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 18. “pueda tambien la autoridad eclesiástica ceñirse ajustadamente a las disposiciones civiles.”
plural of the newspaper editorial, distancing itself from García Torres (who goes unnamed throughout the piece) while staging his defense. The article accused the church of launching an unfounded—even libelous—critique, arguing that officials could not refute the novel’s historical accuracy and instead disingenuously cast “enemies of the Inquisition as enemies of faith.”127 Offering textual citations to support their point, it accused the censor Sollano of cherry-picking his arguments and “confusing dogma with discipline, principles with rites, divine right with ecclesiastical right.”128

Overall, the “Defense” reads more like counter-censorship to Sollano’s own censorship, in which the authors questioned his interpretive capabilities.129 At first, the article proposed an alternative Catholic argument, emphasizing that the principles of faith had never been violated. Citing laws from the Nueva Recopilación and more recent legislation, it gradually slid into confrontation, suggesting the church had violated protocol and with it “the sacred right of property, and above all else, intellectual liberty,” rights guaranteed, it argued, even under monarchy.130 Betraying a similar style to that used by García Torres in his statement against Lucas Alamán the year before, the article gathered evidence from a wide array of legal codes and beyond, sprinkling citations about censorship and due process from the colonial and republican eras with quotations from

127 Defensa del editor de la obra titulada los Misterios de la inquisición, contestando el dictamen del Sr. Consultor de la Junta Diocesana de Censura, en virtud del cual se declaró prohibido, y se fulminó por el señor vicario capitular una excomunicación mayor. (Mexico City: Imprenta d V. G. Torres, 1850), 4-5. “enemigos de la Inquisición, como enemigos de la fé.”
128 Ibid., 8. “confundir el dogma con la disciplina, los principios con los ritos, el derecho divino con el derecho eclesiástico”
129 They explicitly stop short of questioning his interpretation of scripture, however. Ibid., 46.
130 Ibid., 14. “el sagrado derecho de propiedad, y sobre todo la libertad intelectual.”
Tacitus and scripture, among other references. The attack intensified as the article set out to prove that the Inquisition really was, counter to Sollano’s claims, a terrible institution bent on suppressing enlightenment, through long lists of historical incidents and names of Mexican intellectuals called before its tribunal. Just as the censor had picked apart the *Mysteries*, so the “Defense” scrutinized Sollano’s own citation practices, suggesting he had misinterpreted not only the novel, but his own intellectual touchstones, contained in references to Burke, Voltaire, and Balmes.

In fact, the article argued, the censor’s mind was already made up before he had read the novel, “since he read...the polemic about *The Mysteries of the Inquisition.*” This polemic, the article explained, had played out between “the writers of *El Universal* and the *publisher*” of the novel—a statement that, in emphasizing the importance of the earlier polemic, erased the participation of *El Siglo* altogether and reduced the triadic fight to a dyadic one.131 While *El Universal* “sustains the cause of the monarchy and trades in defending theocracy,” the publisher of the novel is an “honorable man, good citizen, father of a family, laborious, active and enterprising, who, having learned of the historical and literary merit of the work, consulting with enlightened persons, religious without hypocrisy ..., attempted to make a reprint that would earn him some profit without any political or religious intentions.”132 Explaining that a foreign edition of the

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131Ibid., 49. Italic in original. “Desde que leyó el señor vicario capitular la polémica sobre los Misterios de la Inquisición” .... “los contendientes eran los redactores del *Universal*, y el *editor* de los *Misterios de la Inquisición*”

132Ibid. “El editor de los *Misterios*, hombre honrado, buen ciudadano, padre de familia, laborioso, activo y emprendedor, que conociendo el mérito histórico y literario de la obra, consultando con personas ilustradas, religiosas sin hipocresía, que no comercian con finjida fé, intentó hacer una reimpresión que le produjera alguna utilidad sin intenciones ni fines algunos políticos ni religiosos,”
same novel had circulated in Mexico the year before (in the port cities of Tampico and Veracruz), the article argued that the publisher had only facilitated the already available book’s acquisition.

Here, the article constructed an image of the publisher as a money-minded figure disinterested in politics altogether. Adopting the identity that had been flatly denied by Ignacio Cumplido at the start of the polemic, the article highlighted the commercial aspect of the editorial endeavor, disavowing its ideological component. The well-known liberal leanings of García Torres’s print production remained a specter behind the article’s arguments, and emerged in the way it characterized religion. While the article argued that *El Universal* manipulated religion for material gain, it explained that *El Monitor* “defends and has always defended the healthy doctrine of the Savior of the world: man is free: every man is equal to another: Jesus Christ taught liberty and equality.” 133 Far from disavowing religion altogether, the article merged Christian principles and liberal critique. This tactic followed the strategy, adopted from the beginning, of defending the *Mysteries* as a morally acceptable text, based on a characterization of religion as faith rather than church doctrine.

**Renegotiating the Status Quo**

Nearly a month after the Minster of Justice forwarded the case to the fiscal of the Supreme Court, Agustín Flores Alatorre, for review, the latter replied with a lengthy opinion. The fiscal’s role, Flores Alatorre explained, involved determining whether the

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133Ibid., 50. “el *Monitor* defendía y ha defendido siempre la sana doctrina del Salvador del mundo: *el hombre es libre: todo hombre es igual a otro*” Jesucristo enseñó la libertad y la igualdad.”
rights of the nation had been offended by the action’s of the Archbishopric, and if so, to press charges. The answer hinged on two questions: should the author or publisher of the book have been heard by the Junta de Censura before the ban went into effect, and had the publisher’s property been violated by the act of ordering that the copies be seized?134 Basing his opinions on press laws (specifically, the February 22, 1813 law of the Spanish Cortes, ratified after independence) and rules issued in 1820 by the Bishop of Toledo governing church protocol on censorship, Flores Alatorre found that García Torres did not deserve an audience, since the book in question fell under a particular classification (“profoundly immoral work”) that denied the author or editor a hearing.135 Since no civil law had been violated, as the church retained its authority over religious imprints and had acted within its scope, the fiscal determined he could not bring charges against the Junta de Censura. Furthermore, he urged the civil authorities to comply with the law by assisting the church in seizing copies of the prohibited book.

Ten days after the fiscal had emitted his decision, the Minister of Justice Castañeda displayed his dissatisfaction with the results in a letter to the Senator Francisco M. Olaguíbel. The fiscal, Castañeda explained, had misinterpreted his order. Rather than requesting that he press charges over the Mysteries issue, Castañeda had merely solicited a protocol to guide government actions in such cases, in order to comply properly with the 1813 law from the Spanish Cortes. Submitting the case to Olaguíbel and the senator Teodosio Lares, Castañeda requested they determine a compliance plan.

134 Disposiciones legales, 27.
135 Ibid., 35. “una obra profundamente inmoral, obscena, inductiva al protestantismo.”
Within two weeks, the senators (one liberal, one conservative) had prepared a response, along with a 21-point set of rules. Although they consulted the same set of laws and guidelines examined by the fiscal Flores Alatorre, they reached a different conclusion. Vicente García Torres, they reasoned in consulting the various religious classifications of books, did in fact deserve a hearing as the interested party, a category that might include authors or editors, as well as booksellers, printers, or merchants. Because the Junta de Censura had not convened this hearing, not only civil, but also church law had been violated, and thus the civil authorities should not provide assistance to the church by seizing the books.

The senator’s decision differed markedly in its sensibility towards church authority. While Flores Alatorre expounded at length on the divine rights invested in church authority and the state’s duty to respect and uphold this authority, Lares and Olaguibel examined the case with greater skepticism, suggesting that a good reason must be present to compel civil authorities to assist the church in what they characterized as an authority exercised primarily over the consciences of believers. Discursively, they maintained the obligation of civil authorities in upholding church authority over religious matters. Yet the senator’s own twenty-one-point rules did little to clarify government procedure as it might apply to real life circumstances. As the Mysteries’ censorship had unfolded, it became clear that church officials did not necessarily follow church protocol, and civil authorities similarly failed to enforce their part of the bargain. The rules, which

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136 Ibid., 57.
137 Ibid.
essentially restated portions of law and protocol originally elaborated elsewhere, did not address the issue of mutual non-compliance, but rather postponed a definitive decision for another day, maintaining the status quo and leaving tensions unresolved.

Reflecting this ambivalence, the government ordered that all the documents relative to the case be published in a 138-page pamphlet featuring not only the correspondence between the Minister of Justice, García Torres, church officials, the fiscal and senators, but also all of the laws and rules they cited in their opinions and complaints. By publishing these materials for public examination, the government appeared to perform its duty of offering legal transparency. Although it is difficult to imagine that readers would rather peruse the dry legal documents and opinions than continue devouring the latest installment of the *Mysteries*, at least officials had ostensibly produced a guidebook for resolving future issues while reinforcing the appearance of legality. By feigning ignorance when the fiscal submitted a report clearly at odds with government priorities, the state deflected and deflated the obviously polemical issue. Although cast as a procedural misunderstanding, the issue was clearly a political one, and the Minister of Justice’s strategy suggests that in 1850 state officials were neither prepared to use the case to provoke outright confrontation with their religious counterparts nor willing to bow to church demands to punish Vicente García Torres, whose decision to print the *Mysteries* in book form represented a considerable economic investment.

Subsequent censorship cases in 1851 reveal that wrinkles in church-state policies were not ironed out by the *Mysteries*’ published decision. Nevertheless, church officials
recommended its consultation to assist church protocol: in an 1851 denunciation against an article in *El Monitor*, the church’s *promotor fiscal* advised the *Junta* to consult the rules confirmed in the *Mysteries* case, and to communicate with the newspaper’s editor in private (allowing time to correct the error) before proceeding against him. By 1852, a church official advised the archbishop that, rather than publically pursuing a censorship case against *El Monitor*, they should let the matter drop: an announcement “would give way to new writings from the impious, that would augment the scandal of some and corrupt more the morality of others.”

**Conclusion: García Torres’s Last Laugh**

Although the Archbishopric’s ban on the *Mysteries* remained in effect for those pious individuals willing to follow it, the church failed to convince the national government to help it exercise its rights of censorship. In the end, Vicente García Torres carried the day, a fact his newspaper explained, for those uninterested in wading through (or unaware of) the printed documentation, in a modest back-page notice in late November. The novel’s serial run in *El Monitor* had finished in mid-October, and the final installments for the book edition had been printed. *El Monitor* offered its own interpretation of the government’s decision, explaining that the church might still censor the novel, but that they would get no aid from the authorities without first bringing in the

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138 Officials denounced an editorial in *El Monitor* critical of the priest Pascual Hernández of the Espíritu Santo church, but advised the board cite the newspaper’s editor “so that he correct and emmends said editorial and secure the catholic sense according to the stated rule,” before bringing public charges. AGN, Bienes Nacionales, caja 732, exp. 19.
139 AHAM, Base Siglo XIX, caja 85, exp. 21. “daría lugar a nuevos escritos de los impíos, que aumentarán el escándalo de unos, y corrompieran más la moral de otros.”
editor for a hearing. “In the case that said editor shows himself reluctant,” the article continued, “the vicario will have to make a denouncement before a popular jury.”

Implying that he would, in fact, resist church overtures, the article set up García Torres as the lone man standing between the church’s actions and all the readers of the French novel. It also, however, positioned the publisher as a conduit for the law: if García Torres refused, the case would pass to a popular jury, backed by the force of the constitution and current press laws. Unlike in Cumplido’s 1840 drama, García Torres suggested he had the law on his side: rather than claiming to embody an absent legality as Cumplido had, the article suggested García Torres had only to sit back and let events run their course. Under this scenario, the article reasoned, “our readers and the numerous subscribers of the *Misteries* will see that it is still a long way off that the Sr. vicario might achieve the proposed objective.”

That the article appeared on the back page of the newspaper suggested that the conflict was winding down. García Torres’s position revealed the drawn-out tensions and negotiations of the status quo, even as post-war elites looked on Mexican politics as having entered what Will Fowler terms “the final stage of despair.” Of particular note, García Torres, in his communications with government officials, never broached the issue of freedom of the press as a concept that should be extended to religious materials. Neither did officials,

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140 “Misterios de la inquisición,” *El Monitor Republicano*, November 23, 1850, 4. “en caso de mostrarse renuente dicho editor, tendrá el vicario que hacer la denuncia ante un jurado popular.”

141 Ibid. “Por esto verán nuestros lectores, y los numerosos suscriptores de los *Misterios*, que aun está muy distante el que el Sr. vicario logre el objeto que se propuso.”

who avoided the question of the *Mysteries*’ moral suitability and thus skirted outright confrontation with the archbishopric. Rather than attacking the church head on, García Torres’s discursive posturing worked to protect readers—specifically those interested in reading obviously anti-Catholic and lurid drama—from religious power, assuring them that the real issue wasn’t that their souls were in danger, but that their purchased copies were safe from confiscation. Seen from this perspective, controversial novels (like the *Mysteries*) pushed a critique of religious power indirectly by appealing to another liberal point of debate—individual property rights. Church officials themselves recognized the dangers of this approach when they complained about readers not wanting to compromise their complete newspaper collections.

Editorial battles between the trio of Mexico City printers continued to shape the political and cultural scene. When the presidential administration changed hands in 1851, García Torres stepped, once again, into the role of printer to take up many of the government’s contracts, amassing a considerable sum before the Wars of Reform and subsequent invasion by French forces radically reconfigured the city’s print landscape.
Chapter 4. Getting into the Printing Business: Centralizing Power in the National State

In the last days of 1867, just months after liberal troops had defeated French forces that, allied with conservatives, had occupied Mexico for five years, a small printed book appeared in Mexico City under the title *Los traidores pintados por sí mismos*.1 Published with the certification of the chief clerk of the Ministry of External and Internal Affairs, the work promised to reproduce “the secret book of Maximilian, containing his impressions of his servants.”2 An introductory text explained that the book in fact reproduced another book—discovered amongst the private papers of the recently deposed (and executed) emperor Maximilian. The introduction described the found object in detail, bolstering the credibility of the account by reconstructing the material details of quotidian governance: the dead emperor’s paper trail. Maximilian’s book had been handwritten in the pages of a blank book, cheaply bound with a cloth or leather spine and marbleized paper covers, purchased at the well-known Delanoé bindery for two pesos.3 Its text—mostly written in French allegedly by the hand of Maximilian’s advisor Félix Eloin—amounted to crib notes for Maximilian about the various Mexicans who had collaborated with or opposed his rule. Many offered highly unflattering descriptions.

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1 The title translates literally as “Traitors painted by themselves,” or, more figuratively, “Traitors in their own words,” and the volume measures 125 x 180 mm. *Los traidores pintados por sí mismos: libro secreto de Maximiliano, en que aparece la idea que tenía de sus servidores,* (Mexico City: Imprenta del Gobierno en Palacio, a cargo de José María Sandoval, 1867).
2 “libro secreto de Maximiliano, en que aparece la idea que tenía de sus servidores.”
3 The introduction describes the binding style as “a la holandesa,” an economical binding style frequently used for ledgers, business purposes, or cheap imprints. Blank books could be ordered with different page quantities. Maximilian’s apparently included 4 manos, or 100 sheets of paper folded in half.
Intended to expose and humiliate the conservative collaborators, the volume assured readers of its veracity by inviting doubters to consult the original copy on file in the Ministry of External Affairs. In doing so, it positioned itself within a world of writing and scribal accouterments that would have been recognizable to city residents familiar with ready-to-purchase blank books, items that were ubiquitous in bureaucratic and business settings by the 1860s. Yet unlike the original text it reproduced, *Los traidores* was a printed volume that had been produced by a new government entity: the Government Printshop. Its title page provided readers with this crucial information, bearing the news that this printshop had reopened inside the national palace. Although the title hid the fact that this printshop had actually been established under Maximilian’s rule, it nevertheless proclaimed a new kind of authority for the national government: the authority to represent itself and retell Mexico’s political history through print. The work’s title, furthermore, referenced a well known landmark of liberal printing—the 1854 satirical collection of social “types,” *Los mexicanos pintados por sí mismos*, in which liberal contributors had offered a humorous yet biting critique of Mexican society that envisioned reform. While *Los mexicanos* had been produced at a moment when liberals were locked out of power, *Los traidores* was a product of liberal victory.

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4 I have located copies of ledgers prepared with pre-lined paper dating to the late 1830s, but the practice of purchasing pre-made ledgers and books similar to Maximilian’s (and with the customary stamp on the inside cover) seems to have taken off in the 1850s. Examinations of notaries’ roles in Mexico’s legal and business cultures have not explored their material aspects in detail. Michael C. Scardaville, “Justice by Paperwork: A Day in the Life of a Court Scribe in Bourbon Mexico City,” *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 4 (2003): 979-1007; Juliette Levy, ”Notaries and Credit Markets in Nineteenth-Century Mexico,” *Business History Review* 84, no. 3 (2010): 459-478.

5 On *Los mexicanos* as a key example of *costumbrismo* and the development of lithography in Mexico, see María Esther Pérez Salas, *Costumbrismo y litografía en México: un nuevo modo de ver* (Mexico City:
As the careful attention to material details reveals, the government editors of Maximilian’s notes took extra measures to convince readers that such a book was not simply a fiction invented by the liberal government to settle scores. Aware that reproducing its text in print offered only tenuous proof, officials took pains to rehabilitate print as a medium that could be trusted with a seal of government approval. As previous chapters explored, print had become an increasingly politicized medium over the previous several decades, as printers themselves developed clear political agendas. Printers also leveraged these agendas into lucrative business relations with national and local governments, a practice that the establishment of a government printshop sought to eliminate. This chapter charts the evolution of printer-government relations from the 1850s through the 1870s, exploring the growing politicization of the business of printing, a development (although disrupted by periods of warfare) whose momentum was redirected in 1865 when Maximilian’s imperial government established a government printshop.

Violent conflict punctuated the decades between the U.S. invasion of 1847 and Maximilian’s defeat. As political positions continued to radicalize in the wake of the U.S. victory, Mexico experienced several swings in government as a result of growing hostilities between radical and moderate liberals and conservatives. During the 1850s, conservatives orchestrated the return of General Antonio López de Santa Anna, who had

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been exiled in disgrace after leading Mexican troops to crushing defeat by the United States. Santa Anna assumed the presidency in 1853, but soon gained dictatorial powers. By 1855, liberals had regained power after staging a successful military revolt. Led by a younger generation including lawyers Benito Juárez and Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, the liberals enacted sweeping reforms that re-established freedom of the press, separated church and state, eliminated corporate privileges (including indigenous rights to communal landholding), and divested the church of its wealth. The boldness of reforms prompted conservatives—encouraged by ecclesiastics—to take up arms, and plunged the nation into a bloody civil war (1857-1861).

Although liberals emerged victorious from the Wars of Reform, Mexico almost immediately faced invasion by French forces after president Benito Juárez refused to service Mexico’s foreign debts. During French occupation, Napoleon III—along with a delegation of Mexican conservatives—invited Ferdinand Maximilian, the Archduke of Austria, to govern in Mexico as the Emperor Maximilian I. Although Juárez maintained an itinerant government in opposition to Maximilian (who never fully controlled Mexican territory during the five years of occupation), the emperor established a new government in Mexico City, and built relationships with a number of local printers. More importantly, Maximilian set up a government printshop in 1865, the Imprenta del Gabinete Civil, which marked a turning point in government relations to print production.

During the decades of often radical political shifts and protracted war, Mexico City printers developed strategies for doing business in circumstances that swung between favorable and dangerous. The opening of the printshop, however, represented a
fundamental shift in the dynamics of Mexico City’s print landscape, as politicized print gave way to the start of state consolidation over knowledge production through print.

After the defeat and execution of Maximilian in 1867, the liberal governments of the Restored Republic (under Juárez and later Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada) built upon the model of the Imprenta del Gabinete Civil, never to return on the same scale to the kinds of contractual relationships that had previously defined printer-government relations. As the national government itself entered into the business of printing, bureaucrats and laborers alike worked to expand the scope of government knowledge production by establishing new printshops and investing in publications devoted to questions of modern statecraft.

*The Politicization of Printing Contracts, 1849-55*

After U.S. forces withdrew from Mexico City, the Imprenta del Aguila, which had been commandeered by U.S. troops to produce the invaders’ newspaper, took up its contract for government printing again, under new administration and rebranded as the Imprenta de la Calle de Medinas. Yet when its owner, supreme court justice Juan Gómez de Navarrete, died in 1849, this relationship began to falter. Within two years,

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6 In February, 1848, the Ministry of Relaciones Interiores y Exteriores renewed the 5-year 1839 contract of the Imprenta del Aguila for an additional three years. Between 1839 and 1848, the original contract had been extended several times, but was formally renewed in 1848. At this time the signers purged Ignacio Cumplido’s name from the new contract, since he had ceased collaborating with the Imprenta del Aguila in 1841. AGN, Gobernación, legajo 47, exp. 33.

7 By this time, the press was now administered by Ignacio Díaz Triujeque, after long-time administrator José Jimeno, whose career dated to the colonial era, had died or retired. Triujeque, like his predecessor, continued to nudge the cash-strapped national government to pay for its imprints in a timely fashion. In November of 1849, Triujeque complained that his payment for the government gazette was eleven days late, and threatened to quit. The Minister of Relations, however, called his bluff by threatening to accept his resignation, and Triujeque backed off. AGN, Gobernación, legajo 248A, exp. 2, fols. 1021-5.
government officials cancelled the long time contract, leading the shop administrator
Ignacio Triujeque to submit a bitter complaint against what he cast as the government’s
betrayal of a connection more than twenty years old. The printshop, he explained, had
essentially subsidized the government’s information apparatus, operating on credit or at a
loss and often failing to pay workers, who occasionally rose up in protest. Now “in the
very sad state of being unable to serve the public, for having worn out its very abundant
type in the service of the Supreme Government,” the printshop had been abandoned to its
fate. The administrator demanded that the government repay its outstanding bill of 7,329
pesos, a hefty sum.

The administrator’s lament—considered alongside scattered bills and requests for
payment found in ministerial archives—reveals how one private printshop sustained the
bulk of the Mexico’s national official printing in spite of receiving irregular
remuneration. Indeed, the good will extended by the Imprenta del Aguila’s judge-owner
surely facilitated this relationship, as the printshop’s finances appear to have suffered
over time. On the other hand, the government contract still represented one of the
biggest games in town, in spite of tardy payments. In the end, two years after losing the
contract, the judge’s widow and former co-owner, Luisa Cacho, had to sell the Imprenta

8 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 248, exp. 1, fols. 202-207.
9 Ibid, “en el tristísimo estado de no poder servir al público, por haber inutilizado sus muy abundantes tipos, en servicio del supremo gobierno.”
10 For example, see José Jimeno’s requests for payments delayed 6 months or more: AGN, Gobernación, legajo 82, exp. 1, imprenta del gobierno, 1829; legajo 140, exp. 5, impresiones del gobierno #18, 1830.
11 Indeed, Gómez de Navarrete had taken out loans in 1842 and 1847 against his press to pay for its refinancing, suggesting the government contract was not always lucrative. AHN, Fermin Villa #719, April 29, 1842 fol. 58; Ramon de la Cueva, #169, February 6, 1847, 1er Tomo, fol. 106.
del Aguila to its workers to cover outstanding back pay. Because the cost of the press exceeded the outstanding pay, even after the press had been discounted, the workers needed to raise 4,000 pesos to cover the difference. Unable to produce the cash, however, they re-sold it the following year to the printer Luis Vidal (who had lost his own press in 1849 to bankruptcy), thereby collecting their cash and transferring their debts. In a cash-strapped economy, this juggling of assets may well have been a pre-arranged solution for satisfying all involved parties.

With the end of the Imprenta del Aguila’s long-term contract and a shift in political power, government printing soon became a more partisan endeavor. Between 1851 and 1853, just after wrapping up his polemics about the *Mysteries of the Inquisition*, radical liberal Vicente García Torres captured a lion’s share of the business, gaining the contract for both official imprints and the government gazette in September of 1851, the latter of which earned him approximately 80 pesos a day. By July of 1852, García Torres billed the government for the considerable sum of 23,150 pesos in printing costs, a

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12 AHN, Ramón de la Cueva, #169, April 13, 1853, vol. 1. The workers, interestingly, won out over other creditors who contested their rights to be first in line.
13 This may well have been the intended strategy in the entire transaction. The printers, unable to cover the remaining purchase price (3916 pesos, or 2/3 of the press’ value of 5864 pesos) owed to Gómez de Navarrete’s widow, re-sold the printshop to Luis Vidal the following year; perhaps this strategy was intended not to take ownership of the press but get cash payments through flipping the printshop. Vidal, who had himself lost his press—valued at 1350 pesos—to bankruptcy in 1849, bought the press for 5390 pesos. AHN, Jose de Jesus Piña, #534, October 13, 1854. On Vidal’s *concurso de bienes*, and subsequent life of his printshop, see AGN, TSJDF, 1849, caja 265 (box 8 of 1849 series), exp. 12-11.
14 On navigating credit in the cash-scarce economy of nineteenth-century Mexico City, see Marie Eileen Francois, *A Culture of Everyday Credit: Housekeeping, Pawnbroking, and Governance in Mexico City, 1750-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).
15 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 248, exp. 1, fols. 208-221. García Torres increased his charges from 76 to 80 pesos/day for 500 copies of “El Constitucional.”
total that Treasury officials disputed for some time.\textsuperscript{16} García Torres’s cursory requests for payment—sprawled hastily across half-slips of paper—may have motivated officials to re-examine the contracting system: a month after sending his sizeable bill, García Torres’s office was commissioned to print the Ministry of the Interior’s new set of rules to govern official imprints. In addition to centralizing print oversight under the General Archive, the guideline explained that printers should bill the government with detailed receipts.\textsuperscript{17}

When the presidency of Mariano Arista ended by coup in January of 1853, García Torres learned that the Ministry of Hacienda had broken the terms of his contract by printing a memorandum at Ignacio Cumplido’s printshop. Upon complaining to new officials, García Torres received word that his contract had been cancelled.\textsuperscript{18} Soon, he composed a second letter of protest, in which he cast the cancellation as “an act of Power, naked of all form, destitute of all legality,” and with false incredulity accused the government of being worse than a monarchy.\textsuperscript{19} García Torres bemoaned the lengths he had gone to serve official printing needs: he had amassed a large stock of paper of many sizes and qualities, acquired additional printing presses and contracted extra workers—he even described setting up a printing press inside the National Palace.\textsuperscript{20} Because the

\textsuperscript{16} AGN, Gobernación, legajo 248, exp. 1, fols. 208-221. The treasury argued that García Torres had overcharged by 1,500 pesos, an accusation the printer contested in a letter to the ministry of the interior. The issue’s resolution is lost, but García Torres continued to hold the contract for another year, suggesting he had been paid.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Reglamento para las impresiones del gobierno}, (Mexico City: Tipografía de Vicente García Torres, 1852), article 37.

\textsuperscript{18} AGN, Gobernación, legajo 248, exp. 1, fols. 113-114.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibíd., fols. 115-118. “un acto del Poder, desnudo de toda forma, destituida de toda legalidad.”

\textsuperscript{20} I have found no supporting evidence to corroborate this final assertion.
government never paid on time, the printer complained, “I have had to defray enormous expenses, compromise my credit, contract debts, and expose myself to the dangers of bankruptcy.” Although he pointed to the binding clauses of the contract in hopes that it would be reinstated, García Torres also requested that the administration provide him with copies of his paperwork in case he needed to pursue the matter in court.

García Torres’s contract was a casualty of yet another return to power by General Antonio López de Santa Anna. The General had been exiled in 1848 after Mexico’s humiliating defeat by the United States, but conservative politicians orchestrated his return (from exile in Colombia) in 1853 after a coup ended the liberal presidency of Mariano Arista. Because García Torres’s petition reached the Ministry of External and Internal Affairs during this time of political reshuffling, his case took some months to resolve, as government ministers ignored the earlier printing contract. It finally settled on the desk of a new minister, who turned out to be García Torres’s recent adversary, the conservative leader Lucas Alamán.

Alamán surely took pleasure in flatly denying the printer’s request. In a copy of the new contract, Alamán’s office crossed out García Torres’s name and replaced it with that of another printer. It then divided up the remaining official imprints (laws and decrees, and reports and pamphlets) between two other individuals. The three printers,
unlike García Torres, skewed conservative but were also less obviously vocal in politics. The group’s veteran, José Mariano Fernández de Lara, active since the 1820s, printed *El Católico*, the French language *Courrier Français* and myriad bourgeois and legal imprints; he was also most importantly the publisher of Lucas Alamán’s multivolume masterwork, *Historia de Méjico*.24 The other two printers specialized in bourgeois literary, legal, and ladies’ publications as well as calendars for popular audiences, the kinds of materials that intellectuals looked upon with scorn as “frivolous works.”25

Santa Anna’s final administration posed greater than usual challenges to printers, especial liberals. In 1853, Alamán commissioned the drafting of a new press law by Teodosio Lares (who had previously co-written the government’s opinion in the *Mysteries of the Inquisition* case), which required printers and editors who published writings touching on politics or public administration to make deposits with the government against which fines for press law infractions could be deducted.26

While scholars have typically interpreted the Ley Lares as achieving a definitive triumph over the press, archival documents reveal a more complex reality. Government

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24 Laura Suárez de la Torre, Laura Suárez de la Torre, "Una imprenta floreciente en la calle de la Palma número 4," in *Empresa y cultura en tinta y papel: 1800-1860*, ed. Laura Suárez de la Torre and Miguel Angel Castro (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora / Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2001), 133. Suárez de la Torre cautiously considers Lara a conservative, although more definitive evidence emerges later in his career. Laura Suárez de la Torre, "José Mariano Lara: intereses empresariales--inquietudes intelectuales--compromisos políticos," in *Constructores de un cambio cultural: impresores-editores y libreros en la ciudad de México, 1830-1855*, ed. Laura Suárez de la Torre (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr José María Luis Mora, 2003), 183-252.

25 The bibliographer Joaquín García Icazbalceta turned up his nose at such frivolous materials in his appraisal of Mexico City’s printing industry. García Icazbalceta, "Tipografía Mexicana," 247. For a discussion of the calendar genre at midcentury, including Murguía’s contributions, see Wright-Rios, *Searching for Madre Matiana*, chap. 3.

26 On the Ley Lares, see Chávez Lomelí, *Lo público y lo privado*, 133-137.
correspondence reveals both behind-the-scenes discussions between bureaucrats and with printers and editors, as well as willingness on the part of printers—when faced with no other options—to compromise. Ministry of the Interior correspondence shows that individuals frequently appealed to officials for (and received) permission to publish without leaving a deposit, or to contest imposed fines.\textsuperscript{27} Ignacio Cumplido rethought an initial adversarial stance after several hefty fines (300-400 pesos), and was allowed to withdraw his deposit after promising not to publish about politics (or print any writing by Victor Hugo) in his newspaper \textit{El Siglo Diez y Nueve}.\textsuperscript{28} While the administration ordered the closure of García Torres’s press after sending him into internal exile, his wife Mariana Deriar de Torres, via a business manager, successfully appealed to reopen the business in July of 1854.\textsuperscript{29}

Only in some cases did ministry officials stand firm, as in that of Brigida Piña, who “along with a press from which she acquired her bread,” had suffered twenty-two days in prison on accusations of having printed subversive materials.\textsuperscript{30} When Piña requested in July of 1854 that her press be returned after gaining her liberty, officials flatly denied the petition, due to the “bad use made of the press, and damage it has caused.”\textsuperscript{31} Imposed fines, furthermore, were rarely repealed, even when printers made

\textsuperscript{27} See, for example, AGN, Gobernación, legajo 247, exp. 3; legajo 1251, exps. 1-2.
\textsuperscript{28} Cumplido faced fines on May 27 and again on August 12, 1853. By August 18, he had agreed to stop printing about politics. In October he was directed not to publish any Victor Hugo works. See unnumbered correspondence: AGN, Gobernación, legajo 247, exp. 3.
\textsuperscript{29} AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1251, exp. 1.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid. “igualmente una imprenta que era donde adquiria para comer.”
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid. “el mal uso que de la imprenta se ha hecho, y perjuicios que ha causado.”
compelling arguments about their own political positions. For example, Andrés Boix, a printer and newspaper publisher, petitioned ministry officials to avoid paying fines for the newspaper *El Tío Job*. The responsible editor, Luis Villard, had received permission to publish the newspaper in March of 1854 and had contracted Boix to print it. Yet within weeks, *El Tío Job* had angered authorities. Boix argued that the project had seemed acceptable to him at first, “but with the first issues, observing the turn-of-phrase its editors gave [the newspaper], and which did not seem to me convenient, I explained to the said Villard that it did not suit me to continue printing it in my establishment.” By the time Boix got wind of the newspaper’s subversive content and terminated the relationship, he explained, the subversive edition had been denounced. As events unfolded, Luis Villard was discovered to be insolvent, hence Boix was expected to pay the fine. Although he explained that his own newspaper, *El Orden*, had been among the first to support Santa Anna’s administration after his coup against Mariano Arista, ministry officials expressed no sympathy.

In the above cases, the Ley Lares’ specific attention to the mechanics of print production—which clearly addressed printers’ tactics for evading responsibility in previous decades—ensured that someone, specifically, the printer, would necessarily be punished, if they could be identified. As in previous decades, however, anonymity

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32 Fines did not fall solely upon printers. In December of 1853, José Mariano Lara provided officials with the name of the responsible party—Octaviano Muñoz Ledo—for an imprint deemed subversive. Muñoz Ledo received the fine. AGN, Gobernación, legajo 247, exp. 3.
33 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1251, exp 2. (old folder #6), March 2, 1854.
34 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1251, exp. 2. “Pero a los primeros numeros, observando el giro que sus redactores le daban, y que no me pareció conveniente, le hice presente al expresado Villard que no me convenía seguir imprimiéndole en mi establecimiento.”
continued to thwart officials. In one case, officials staged an elaborate ruse to intercept seditious printed materials rumored to be in transit from Mexico City to Oaxaca. To catch the perpetrator and acting on a tip-off, officials sent decoy materials wrapped in yellow paper through the mail to Oaxaca, informing the postmaster to take note of the recipient. To the chagrin of government officials, however, the culprit never collected the parcel.35

When placed within the longer trajectory of efforts to regulate print, the Ley Lares stands only as a more effective, but equally short-lived tool that shared affinities with other previous attempts, none of which succeeded at controlling the nation’s print landscape. Most importantly, its limited duration did little to dampen the long-term careers of one of its main targets, the city’s liberal printers. Just two years after Santa Anna’s installation as “His Most Serene Highness” of Mexico, the Revolution of Ayutla, staged in the provinces, swept liberals back to power and removed Santa Anna definitively from the political scene. Printers like Ignacio Cumplido and Vicente García Torres resumed their customary positions. In fact, only the conservative Rafael Rafael left the stage. During Santa Anna’s administration—having recovered from political exile at the hands of liberals in 1851—Rafael had been appointed Mexican consul in New Orleans and New York and worked in some capacity on negotiations for the Gadsden Purchase.36 Yet as the liberal revolt spread around Mexico’s provinces, Rafael (operating from New York via a representative) sold his printing business to his manager, Felipe

35 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 247, exp. 3.
36 Here I rely on the interpretations offered in Rodríguez Piña, “Rafael de Rafael y Vilá: El conservadurismo como empresa,” 362-377.
Escalante and, after traveling on diplomatic business to Europe, renounced his consulship and apparently made off with 15,000 pesos, which he took with him as payment for services rendered to his final home: the Spanish colony of Cuba, where he established a conservative newspaper and lived out his days denouncing freemasonry.\(^{37}\)

*Political Pendulum Swings and Ping-Pong Contracts, 1855-1865*

By 1855 liberal printers returned to action under the moderate liberal administrations of Juan Álvarez and Ignacio Comonfort, which presided over the enactment of a series of sweeping Laws of Reform that restored broader press freedom, eliminated religious and military privileges to special courts (the *fuero*), obligated corporate entities (including the church and indigenous communities) to sell property, and established a civil registry. In 1856, Comonfort convened a Constitutional Congress—in the face of clergy who had revolted against the new reforms—to consolidate a staunchly liberal plan of government. Meanwhile, Vicente García Torres, returned from exile, began working to recover the contracts he had lost during Santa Anna’s administration.

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\(^{37}\) Discussed in ibid., 371. See also AHN, Francisco Villalon, #722, June 30, 1854, fol. 185; Daniel Mendez, #433, March 8, 1848. The exact circumstances and motivations of Rafael’s abandonment of Mexico are murky. According to Piña, he left the U.S. for Europe on a commission to attract European immigrants to Mexico. Once there, in February 15, he renounced his role as consul. His letter of resignation defended his actions as just recompense for his services, and cited ideological differences with the Santa Anna administration, which he characterized as contrary to the conservative beliefs he had defended in El Universal. His letter (reproduced in fragments by Piña) reveals he was aware of the Ayutla Revolution, suggesting that politics and the desire to avoid further liberal retribution may have motivated his actions. Rafael published *La Voz de Cuba*, and in 1883, a compilation of Rafael’s anti-freemasonry writings appeared as Rafael de Rafael and Antonio Juan de Vildósola, *La masonería pintada por sí misma. Artículos publicados en el periódico "La Voz de Cuba," de la Habana* (Madrid: Impr. de A.P. Dubrull, 1883).
García Torres’s efforts offer a window into printers’ strategies for navigating local and national-level swings in political power. In December, García Torres successfully petitioned the Ayuntamiento, Mexico City’s municipal government, to have his contract, which had been reassigned during the Santa Anna administration to Juan Navarro, reinstated. In January of 1857, García Torres also wrote to the Secretary of the Interior, José María Lafragua, to enquire about reinstating his contract with the national government, canceled under Alamán. In a brief and direct letter that suggested a degree of familiarity between the two parties, García Torres reminded Lafragua that, in a recent conversation, “you suggested that this business would soon be arranged,” and begged the minister “to keep your promise” and “save me [from pursuing] moratoriums and disagreeable measures.” Lafragua, days from departing to serve as Mexico’s emissary to Spain, replied several days later that “difficulties born from the terrible circumstances in which we have lived during this year have impeded me from carrying out my desire.” He continued apologetically, “I recently spoke to the President, and his excellency replied: that he could not decide anything regarding this matter until the Treasury Department is arranged; as he wanted everything to proceed in order.”

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38 In exchange for printing all the Ayuntamiento’s materials over a two-year period, García Torres gave a 25% discount off standard prices, and printed any news in his newspaper El Monitor Republicano, for which the Ayuntamiento would pay 20 subscriptions. AHN, José María Ramirez, #53, December 29, 1855, fol. 462.
39 AGN, Gobernacion, legajo 1249, exp. 3, sub-folder #2, May 14, 1857. “me ofreció que pronto quedaría este negocio arreglado;” “tenga cumplimiento su promesa;”; “ahorrararme de moratorias y de pasos desagradables.”
40 Ibid. “Dificultades nacidas de las circunstancias terribles en que hemos vivido durante este año, me han impedido llevar a cabo mi deseo.”
41 Ibid. “Ultimamente habló al Sr. Presidente, y SE me contestó: que nada podía aún decidir sobre este asunto hasta que arreglase los ramos de hacienda; por que deseaba que todo caminase en orden.”
García Torres’s relationships with high-level officials preoccupied by the tasks involved with drafting the new constitution were not strong enough to get his contract re-established. Indeed, officials had lost track of the request by May, when the Treasury sent out a new call for bids for the government printing contract. García Torres quickly responded, however, with a reminder, and the Treasury suspended the bidding process until the matter could be arranged.42 Within several months, however, war had broken out after conservatives revolted against the 1857 constitution, setting up a government in Mexico City (under Félix Zuloaga), against which liberal forces, led by Benito Juárez, would fight for three years.

Conservative occupation of Mexico City during the Reforma War (1857-61) again created opportunities for a different set of local printers, who competed anew for contracts: García Torres predictably lost his Ayuntamiento contract in 1858 with conservative ascension to power.43 Officials split the national contract between the widow of Andrés Boix and Juan Navarro in April of 1858, although by December Navarro had already lodged a complaint against the distribution of printing work.44 Juárez’s parallel liberal government, operating for a time in Veracruz, contracted with local printers there to produce its own government gazette and official imprints.45 When

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42 Ibid.
43 AHDF, Ayuntamiento, Biblioteca: Publicaciones de Boletín y Actas de Cabildo, vol. 431, exp. 27. Nabor Chávez, and Andrés Boix submitted proposals to the Ayuntamiento in 1858 and were instructed to attend a bidding auction; García Torres protested in 1859, asking the Ayuntamiento to respect his reinstated 1855 contract.
44 The complaint was dismissed. AGN, Justicia, vol. 624, exp. 39, fols. 275-277; exp. 93, fols. 437-443.
45 Liberals paid Rafael de Zayas, Domingo Cabrera, and Manuel Díaz Mirón in 1860. AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1046, exp 1.
liberals triumphed over conservatives in 1861 and returned to Mexico City, they again reshuffled contracts: García Torres re-gained his Ayuntamiento contract for the second time, for instance.46

Archival records reveal little about printers’ activities during the years in which president Juárez struggled to rebuild the government with an empty treasury, but Annita Melville Ker’s compilation of Mexico’s government publications shows that a government gazette was only printed during the first half of 1861.47 By 1862, French troops invaded Mexico after Juárez cancelled service of Mexico’s foreign debts. French occupation of Mexico City in 1863 resulted in yet another round of politicized print turnover, with García Torres losing his Ayuntamiento contract for the third time.48 Felipe Escalante and Miguel Zornoza (administrator working for the widow of the recently-deceased Andrés Boix, Carlota Ybañez de Boix) earned key contracts as printers for the newly formed imperial government, headed by Maximilian I.

Undeterred by his loss, García Torres continued to dog officials—albeit from a different angle. In 1864, he presented the Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público of the imperial administration of Maximilian I with an eight-year old bill for a contract he had held with the government of the neighboring state of Puebla, signed with a liberal administration. Rather than accusing the government of unjust behavior, he instead pitched his request by acting as if the imperial administration were simply the legitimate

46 AHDF, Ayuntamiento, Biblioteca: Publicaciones de Boletín y Actas de Cabildo, vol. 431, exp. 32.
48 AHDF, Ayuntamiento, Biblioteca: Publicaciones de Boletín y Actas de Cabildo, vol. 431, exp. 32.
successor government that, as such, should honor previous contracts. His letter explained how the government of the state of Puebla still owed him a substantial sum from an 1857 printing contract. According to the notarial documents he submitted as evidence, García Torres had renegotiated an 1856 contract (which he accused Puebla officials of having violated when they ceased production of the state’s official newspaper) for handling Puebla’s official imprints, originally valued at over 19,000 pesos, along with the sale of a well-appointed printshop to the state, for the sum of 10,000 pesos. Relying on the centralized command in place under the imperial administration eight years later, García Torres petitioned officials in Mexico City to get Puebla to honor a contract made with defeated liberals. The ensuing correspondence went back and forth for six months, as the Political Prefect of Puebla—José María Esteva, one of Maximilian’s close advisors—had underlings dutifully track down documentation from three previously suppressed local administrations. In their private correspondence, officials recognized the balance of the debt (around 7,000 pesos), but no evidence indicates whether they repaid García Torres.

Between 1850 and 1865, a handful of printers served as contractors for an increasingly polarized political elite. During this period when patronage and politics were strongly linked and war protracted, this involved losing out as often as reaping the rewards. When conservatives controlled Mexico City in wartime, for example, García

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49 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1046, exp. 4, Impresiones, “Puebla. D. Vicente García Torres pidiendo el pago de una cantidad por un contrato de impresiones que celebró con el Gobierno de Puebla.”
Torres barely published at all. Given these circumstances, it is perhaps remarkable that printers managed to ride out the political climate to benefit from alternating power holders. Their resilience reveals that top printers had other resources (either accumulated savings or income or assistance attained through other means) on which to draw to stay afloat during adverse political regimes.

**A New System of Production: the Imprenta del Gabinete, 1865-1867**

After establishing a government in Mexico City in 1862, Maximilian’s administration continued to rely on local printers for many of its publishing needs. As such, it inherited the long-term print relationships that had produced headaches in previous decades. One such headache highlighted the degree to which state needs depended on juggling relationships with multiple parties. In June of 1863, for example, Basilio Arrillaga, a former senator who had compiled Mexican legislation into volumes since 1830, approached Ministry of Justice officials to request financial assistance for their continued production. The ministry immediately assented, and directed Arrillaga to publish the compilation in rolling installments with contractor Miguel Zornoza, the director of the printshop owned by Andrés Boix’s widow, Carlota Ybañez de Boix. The details of the publishing arrangement, however, required ongoing negotiations. Officials expected the printers to finance the publication’s multiple installments, and promised to

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50 Worldcat searches for 1858-1860 returned just a single volume.
51 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1127, exp. 2. Arrillaga’s previous compilations were published by various printers, including José Mariano Fernández de Lara and Vicente García Torres. Arrillaga, who served as Senate President in 1838, should not be confused with the prominent Jesuit scholar and conservative theorist who died in 1867.
pay Arrillaga a monthly fee (destined for paying his scribes) out of book sales, which would be handled by the government archive. Arrillaga would also earn a commission on book sales and get to keep 100 copies of the edition of 1,000 for himself.

Sales, however, did not keep pace with production, and both Arrillaga and the printer Zornoza complained about payment delays. Over the course of the year, Zornoza would have to renegotiate the bill (losing 40 pesos off every installment) and Carlota Ybañez de Boix would personally complain to the Ministry of Justice, which she accused of auctioning the printing contract that was rightfully hers, most likely to defer payment of the edition. Arrillaga, signing in a shaky hand that betrayed his advanced age, would pester officials for his commission fee, which the archive had failed to produce. When chastised by the Ministry of Justice in May, the Director of the Archives countered, “I judge it difficult to materialize each month the said quantity with only the sale of the notebooks of legislation, as long as Sr. Arrillaga continues announcing and selling them in his own establishment, because this paralyzes all sales through this office.”

Furthermore, he explained, the archive had been ordered to give away so many loose notebooks to various offices that sales were further harmed. He argued that the archive would never sell copies unless it was the sole distributor. By August, officials threw up their hands and ordered that Arrillaga be paid not from book sales, but from the treasury.

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52 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1127, exp. 2. “juzgo difícil realizar en cada mes la cantidad de que se trata con solo la venta de los cuadernos de legislación, siempre que estos los siga anunciando y expendiendo el S. Arrillaga en su propia casa, por que así paraliza toda venta por esta oficina…”
Arrillaga died almost immediately after officials approved his payment (and new supplicants soon appeared to take his place), but Maximilian’s administration—perhaps motivated by the hassle of overseeing publishing agreements that triangulated between state, printers, and authors—had already taken decisive steps towards securing the government’s oversight of print production. By mid-1865, officials in Maximilian’s administration established an Imprenta del Gabinete inside the walls of the former National Palace, staffed by four individuals almost certainly brought over from Europe for the job. 53 Within several months, as the printshop took on the work of producing the government’s gazette (the Diario del Imperio, formerly printed by Escalante), the small shop had been expanded withhirings of local printers. The Imprenta’s first director, Carlos Nice, was replaced by an up-and-coming Mexico City printer, Francisco Díaz de Leon, perhaps because the latter better understood the local mechanics of management.

A print-world prodigy, Díaz de Leon began his career at thirteen as an apprentice in the printshop of the conservative Rafael Rafael, and by seventeen was managing the same shop, by then under the ownership of Felipe Escalante, who, in partnership with the bookseller José María Andrade, had taken over Rafael’s business after he absconded to Cuba. 54 Díaz de Leon likely earned his post (at some point in his mid to late twenties) within the imperial bureaucracy through his employer, who had printed the Imperial

53 AGN, Segundo Imperio, caja 37, exp. 013, Imprenta del Gabinete civil del Emperador. The names of the four employees, Carlos Nice, Guillermo Suchanek, Jorge Windisch, and Ramon Kozeschnik, are suggestive; Windisch arrived from Vienna on a five-year contract. Segundo Imperio, caja 48, exp. 009.
54 El Socialista, September 19, 1881. Díaz de Leon’s biography emphasized his honorable familial roots, and how he was forced after the death of his father to find a trade.
Gazette for the occupying administration in 1864 and 1865.55 Diaz de Leon oversaw a staff of twelve (including the three remaining European artisans) made up of two compositors, a formador responsible for readying the Gazette’s type for printing, a printer-typographer, a lithographer, a lithographic draftsman, a machinist, and five printing assistants (literally, “machine servants” and “machine turners”).

While few documents directly address the internal dynamics of the imperial printshop, its payroll records offer several clues. As director, Diaz de Leon earned the highest salary, taking home five times the yearly salary of the “machine servants.” (Figure 16) The young director oversaw a modest operation where a trio of European artisans rubbed elbows with Mexico City printers. Unlike the printers of Spanish, French, and U.S. origins who had established businesses in previous decades, these individuals came from Vienna and other places in the Hapsburg empire as members of Maximilian’s retinue, which conservative diplomat Francisco de Paula de Arrangoiz derided, because many members lacked fluency in Spanish, as “a tower of babel.”56 Although the Europeans’ base pay grade was on par with their skilled Mexican counterparts, each earned an additional 300 pesos per year in bonuses, likely written into initial contracts as incentives.

55 Andrade also had close ties to the occupiers: Maximilian purchased his collection to form the basis for a national library; upon the emperor’s execution, the valuable collection was sold at auction, with much acquired by Hubert Howe Bancroft (currently housed at UC Berkeley’s Bancroft Library). For examples of Escalante’s communications for printing jobs of military rulebooks, ministerial decrees, customs guides in 1865 and 1866, see: AGN, Segundo Imperio, caja 10, exps. 021, 023, 021.
Printshop workers were likely aware of these hierarchies, which added an extra layer of stratification onto typical wage structures based on skill and education level. Unlike the typesetters and machinists, the shop’s printing assistants never signed their names on the accounting slip that recorded bi-monthly distributions of their pay. While Díaz de Leon only occasionally signed on behalf of typesetters who might have been absent or occupied in the moment of accounting, he routinely signed for the press “servants” and “turners,” suggesting these lowest-paid workers could not write. Such workplace rituals reinforced the hierarchies that ran between printshops’ differently educated manual laborers. Those who did sign for the pay, meanwhile, may have caught a glimpse of their co-workers’ salaries, and could grumble or muse with a mixture of relief and resentment on their own place in the pay scale.

57 Alternately, they might have been considered unworthy of signing, but this seems unlikely given the relatively small size of the shop.
In theory, having printers working inside the palace could result in greater efficiency, and the printshop used its range of technologies to carry out its tasks. For example, the printshop sometimes issued lithographed circulars (instead of printing them with metal type), presumably to save time on internal correspondence or use the shop’s multiple presses at the same time. See, for example, AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1046, exp. 3, June 20, 1865. (Figure 17) Using a different array of mediated steps between the document’s issuer and its intended audiences, the printshop’s lithographic draftsman would have readied and transferred a hand-written document onto a prepared lithography stone, or written in his own hand directly on the stone in mirror image, a skill
he would have mastered while learning the craft. The stone would then be inked, and printed.

The in-house printshop multiplied the possibilities for bureaucratic correspondence. More important than increasing efficiency, however, the establishment of the Imperial Printshop also represented the promise of real and symbolic control over information production, a goal that had eluded Mexico’s republican governments. Given the occupier’s shaky hold over Mexico’s territory, control over print production took on additional importance as a tool of persuasion and internal governance, although total control continued be an ideal: in spite of its symbolic importance and usefulness in producing quotidian items, the printshop remained a modest operation.

Regardless of official print’s provenance, several clues suggest that the medium played a role in imperial governance that departed from typical patterns. Although records are only suggestive, the emperor and his advisors seem to have brought a different sensibility towards print to the task. The administration kept a press secretary that compiled clippings from various newspapers with commentary for easy perusal. It maintained more systematic lists of all approved newspapers and their responsible editors, and provided secret subsidies to the foreign language press, including to an

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60 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1862, entire box.
English-language paper, *The Mexican Times*, operated by the former confederate governor of Louisiana Henry Watkins Allen.⁶¹ Scattered bills reveal at least one notable instance in which the administration also ordered items printed in quantities that exponentially outnumbered typical amounts. The example is an October 1865 manifesto in which Maximilian denounced Benito Juárez for having abandoned Mexican soil. (Figure 18) Juárez’s honorable cause, the emperor proclaimed through print, was now null and void: those who continued to fight were nothing more than “criminals and bandits” over whom “honorable men of the Nation” would triumph.⁶² Although the larger-than-typical size of the decree (46 x 66.5cm) bears mention, it is more surprising that the administration ordered Miguel Zornoza to print this infamous decree—which Juárez would reference in a speech after his triumphant return to the capital—in an extraordinary run of 16,000 copies.⁶³

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⁶¹ For a list of approved publications (including to the *Mexican Times*), see Gobernación, legajo 1046, exp. 4, February 12, 1865. Allen moved to Mexico City after the Civil War and died there soon after. His subsidy is specifically marked as secret in legajo 1046, exp. 4, September 7, 1865.

⁶² AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1046, exp. 5, #119, “De Miguel Zornoza sobre el pago de varios impresiones de esta Secretaria.” “criminales y bandoleros;” “hombres honrados de la Nación.”

⁶³ Justo Sierra attributed the decree’s authorship to the French General Bazaine. Justo Sierra, *Juárez, su obra y su tiempo* (Mexico City: J. Ballescá y Compañía, Sucesores, 1905), 387. AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1046, exp. 5, #119, “De Miguel Zornoza sobre el pago de varios impresiones de esta Secretaria.”
While documents reveal that the printer billed against a baseline batch of 500 copies (a typical amount for print runs of newspapers, circulars and decrees unchanged since the 1820s), the large print run suggests Maximilian’s officials believed it possible to
reach ordinary Mexicans directly, rather than through customarily mediated forms of address used during the colonial era and continued (in modified form) after independence. Here, the emperor or his advisors revealed an optimistic belief in the ability of print to spread a message through closer individual interactions. True, the large size suggested the decree was intended for display in public places, yet officials clearly imagined a propaganda campaign of an unprecedented scale, to be achieved perhaps through plastering city walls or by sending a copy to every village to be posted in a public place. Although typographically heterogeneous, the broadside features several typefaces, chosen by the printshop, which departed notably from the styles favored in pronunciamientos and other persuasive political documents of previous decades. Rather than the bold, slab-serifed display faces common in surviving documents from the 1850s, printers chose a typeface identified in Mexico as “Alemana,” or German, to represent Maximilian’s name and title. Did the printers imagine that this gothic-looking typeface best conveyed connotations of power, authority, and imperiousness, or did they poke fun of Maximilian through the choice? In either case, the broadside’s makers marked Maximilian as an outsider by using the uncommon gothic face, a subtle cue that may not have been lost on all.

Print Sovereignty on the Back of Empire: The Imprenta del Gobierno

Maximilian’s propaganda efforts did not succeed, in the face of continued military resistance combined with Napoleon III’s decision to withdraw French troops from

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64 The term “Alemana” is used to describe an identical typeface in an 1870 type specimen described in chapter five. AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1305, exp. 2, no. 107, fols. 43-46.
Mexico. By 1867, liberal forces commanded by Benito Juárez captured and executed the emperor in the city of Querétaro. In the course of retaking the government administration in Mexico City later that year, liberals established the *Imprenta del Gobierno*, the Government Printshop, in 1867.\(^{65}\) Like its imperial predecessor, the new *Imprenta del Gobierno Supremo* (later the *Imprenta del Gobierno Federal*, or IGF) occupied space in the National Palace. In 1870, it was located on the ground floor of the palace, facing onto the Arista and Artillery Patios in the northern sector.\(^{66}\) The shops’ nine rooms included separate office spaces for the directors of the government gazette and the printshop, a correction room, four composition rooms, storage, and a larger pressroom. The four mules used to power the office’s mechanical presses lived on-site in an adjacent windowless stable.

Among its first publications, the new government issued the exposé of the imperial regime, *Los traidores pintados por sí mismos: the Secret book of Maximilian, revealing his opinions of his servants*.\(^{67}\) The fifty page booklet, an alleged reproduction of Maximilian’s secret notebook with names and unflattering commentary on the abilities of his Mexican collaborators, named one printer: José María Andrade.\(^{68}\) Andrade suffered for his connections to the imperial regime, just as liberal printers had suffered exile,

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\(^{65}\) This date is confirmed not only by the release of official imprints bearing the Imprenta del Gobierno’s *pie de imprenta*, but also the account of its first director, José María Sandoval. AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1305, box 2, exp. 1, fol. 118.

\(^{66}\) AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1305, box 2, exp. 2, old no. 107, fol. 38.

\(^{67}\) Discussed in Conrado Hernández López, "Querétaro en 1867 y la división en la historia (sobre una carta enviada por Silverio Ramírez a Tomás Mejía el 10 de abril de 1867)," *Historia Mexicana* 57, no. 4 (2008): 1203.

\(^{68}\) *Los traidores pintados*, 2.
temporary imprisonment, and fines under conservative governments. While punishment of Mexico City printers remained a constant feature of the political landscape throughout the first half of the century, the nature of punishment shifted after 1847 as political polarization produced a more obvious spoils system accompanied by payback for enemies. The practice after the liberal triumph followed the same pattern. Thus, Andrade’s partner, Felipe Escalante, found his printshop occupied by order of General Porfirio Díaz in June of 1867, when liberal forces re-entered Mexico City. Díaz confiscated its contents and sent them to the National Palace, where the first director of the government printshop, José María Sandoval, divided up the spoils.69

The triumphant liberal government established sovereignty over its official print production by taking over the presses purchased with funds from the imperial coffers and seized from conservative printers. Putting these presses to work, it disavowed the occupiers and their Mexican collaborators through publication of a booklet that publicly shamed so-called cangrejos, crabs, for the titillation of the nation’s reading public.70 Yet beyond humiliating losers and distributing spoils, the government printshop played a critical role in the development and consolidation of the new liberal-controlled state in two ways. On the one hand, in contrast to previous administration policies since 1824, it brought a sizable portion of the government’s day-to-day communications apparatus under centralized control. This eliminated the need to negotiate with city printers who, in

69 Sandoval apparently lent one of Escalante’s printing presses another printer, who resisted later requests to give them back. AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1350, box 2, exp. 2, old no. 11, fols. 1-13.
70 Editions were published in 1900 and 1963, suggesting the document retained historic value or political relevance.
addition to being unpredictable political actors, also submitted unpredictable bills and complained frequently about payment. The new printshop replaced outside contractors with an internal staff of administrators who answered directly to ministry officials and operated according to a set of rules and a predetermined budget, set by the legislature. Legislators emphasized the point of cutting off external ties, explaining in the 1873 set of rules, the *Reglamento para la Imprenta del Supremo Gobierno*, that “the administrator of the printshop of the supreme government may not be employed in another office, nor have his own press, nor be a partner in business of this nature, including typography, bookselling, lithography, editing, manufacture of related goods, etc. etc.”

Although the genres of official memos did not dramatically change, the process became streamlined: functionaries of the government ministries located in various wings of the National Palace could compose informational memos and send them across the building to be converted into loose leaf circulars or decrees, printed in runs of 100 to 600 copies. The government gazette, the *Diario Oficial*, continued to serve its old function as a vehicle of internal information, but would finally gain a consistent title, instead of one that changed with each administration. Standardization did not necessarily correlate with increased circulation, however: in 1877, the IGF printed just 2,000 copies of the government gazette. Yet, if the complaints of the nation’s archivist are to be believed,

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71 “El administrador de la imprenta del supremo gobierno no podrá ser empleado de otro imprenta, ni tener imprenta propia, ni ser socio en negociación de este género, como tipografía, librería, litografía, edición, fabricación de útiles del ramo, etc. etc.” “Reglamento para la Imprenta del Supremo Gobierno” in Manuel Dublán and José María Lozano, *Legislación mexicana ó, Colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la República*, vol. XII (Mexico City: Imprenta del Comercio de E. Dublán y Comp., 1882), 515.

72 See, for example, AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1322, exp. 1.
even this print run far exceeded the gazette’s readership: after copies had been distributed to the various government functionaries and subscribers, the remaining five-hundred copies were deposited in the archives, where “they nearly fill one of the largest rooms in this establishment and if they continue in this proportion, soon there won’t be anywhere to put them.”

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the IGF was a key site of production for government-sponsored publications that worked to make the nation intelligible through print. Scholars who have studied the ways in which political elites mapped and visualized the nation rightly draw attention to the “Restored Republic,” the period after Maximilian’s defeat, as marking an important turning point in the state’s capacity to represent itself. These efforts were inextricably linked to the success of the government printshop, which published not only detailed guidelines for government sectors, foreign trade treaties and plans for commercial and infrastructure projects, but also scholarly and educational works on geography, political economy, medicine and public health, military tactics, and law. The development of projects to describe, measure, and define Mexico corresponds with what Oz Frankel has termed “print statism,” the historical emergence of

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73 The archivist asked officials to cut their remittances down to 100 copies, and the government obliged. AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1264, exp. 2, no. 71, fol. 1. “casi ocupan ya uno de los salones mas grandes de este establecimiento y que si siguen en esta proporcion, pronto faltará local en que colocarlos; creyendo esta oficina que para el servicio publico y del Supremo Gobierno bastarian cien ejemplares de aquel periódico.”


75 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1264, exp. 3 (old no. 4), fols. 25-31, “Inventario de las obras que existen en el Archivo de la Imprenta del Supremo Gobierno,” May, 1877. While the inventory includes some volumes printed before the IGF’s founding, the majority of its volumes dated to after 1868.
a state that constructs itself as a “target of observation and scrutiny” through a field of communication between the state and its constituencies.\textsuperscript{76}

As in the U.S. and British contexts that Frankel studies, Mexico’s “print statism” represented a gesture towards an ideal that did not directly translate into hegemonic power. Nevertheless, it marked a real change in the government’s ability to establish an identity as an authority figure in the realm of knowledge production—a change from decades of “print clientelism” involving patronage relationships with local printshops. This change is reflected in printed materials themselves, especially in the \textit{pies de imprenta} that detailed publishing information. While government decrees and proclamations (the most venerable printed representations of state power with roots in the colonial era) had nearly always been printed without any attribution, larger works (like \textit{reglamentos}, reports, legal compilations or diplomatic treaties) published before the Restored Republic bore the stamp of the contracted private printer—material evidence of the state’s dependence on these figures (and, ironically, made visible by the government’s own press laws mandating this mark of origin). The evolution of the relationship between printer and state authorship can be traced in the first decade of the IGF, when printshop directors customarily included their own names alongside the Imprenta del Gobierno \textit{pie de imprenta}, until this practice faded around 1880.

\textsuperscript{76} Frankel, \textit{States of Inquiry}, 2. Frankel’s work deconstructs ideas of “governmentality” articulated by Michel Foucault, who argues that the power of modern states is wielded through a variety of tactics directed at managing its population, an object in turn constructed in part through administrative efforts based on information—like statistics, censuses, reports—gathered by the state. Michel Foucault, \textit{The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87-104.
Conclusion: A New Hub in the City’s Circuit of Knowledge Production

The institutionalization of the IGF reorganized the relationship between urban printers (including prominent figures like Cumplido, García Torres, and Escalante) and the national government by effectively ending the long-term practice of contracting out printing jobs. While certain ministries did, at certain moments in the late nineteenth century, commission local printers for specific tasks, the era of competition for government printing contracts, linked to politics and personal relationships, for the most part ended. Furthermore, legislators emphasized that cronyism had no place within the new printshop: anyone wishing to have their items printed in the IGF would have to pay market rates.77 Although the legislature singled out print clientelism, it is unlikely that politics and personal relationships stopped playing a role in government printing altogether, not least because ministry officials in the executive oversaw the printing budget. Thus, government officials might underwrite the projects of individuals and organizations by subsidizing printing costs in the IGF.78 The IGF, furthermore, became a space where—through commercial and labor networks—the state connected to the city’s expanding and industrializing print world. As a new entrant into the business of printing, the government patronized the same supply houses, paper manufacturers, and type founders as local printers.79

77 Dublán and Lozano, Legislación mexicana, XII, 515.
78 In 1885, for example, Guillermo Prieto requested and received additional funds to facilitate the production of his volume of poetry “Romancero Nacional” in one of the government’s printshops. AGN, Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, vol. 226, exp. 52.
79 This can be seen in the many “cortes de caja,” monthly accounting reports provided by the IGF’s directors. See, for example, AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1305, box 2, exps. 1-2 (1870); legajo 1322, exp. 1 (1875).
The Government’s printshop not only acted as an early site in the development of a state bureaucracy governed by a philosophy of administration over politics; almost immediately after its founding, it became an important new site in Mexico City’s geography of print. As a place where intellectual projects and state aspirations came together, the IGF was a space where workers and intellectuals labored alongside each other under the rubric and in the service of state knowledge production. As such it represented a key point of contact between state-building aspirations and the urban workers who gave them material printed form. If 1879 census figures are any indication, at least twenty percent of the entire city population of male printers had passed through the IGF’s doors.\(^{80}\) High turnover and part-time working conditions, furthermore, suggest that these same printers worked in other shops around the city, perhaps simultaneously to their tenure in the IGF. The following chapter explores how this space of contact was structured in order to understand the internal hierarchies and horizontal networks that characterized the shared endeavor of knowledge production under Mexico’s triumphant liberal regime as it consolidated power.

\(^{80}\) This takes into account the 44 typesetters I identified in payroll from 1870, 1872, and 1875, plus scattered printers. The 1879 census counted 264 adult male printers. Cited in Porter, *Working Women in Mexico City*, 12.
Chapter 5. Intellectual Production from the Printshop Floor

Do you know what a typesetter is?
If we consider the typesetter solely as the printshop worker who collects and orders letters to compose what is given to him, the typesetter is nothing more than the worker who transforms a work of intelligence into material labor; but if we consider the true typesetter, the man who spends two thirds of his life arranging the thoughts of others, looking over and justifying the proofs in order to make the letters of so many writers, article makers, advertisers, editors and chroniclers decipherable, the issue changes appearance.¹

This fragment, from an 1875 article entitled “The Typesetter,” printed in the worker newspaper *El Socialista*, made the case that typesetters represented more than automatons that materialized literary texts: typesetters instead “have given them form and life.”² The sometimes tongue-in-cheek article portrayed the typesetter as a beleaguered and under-appreciated figure. While puzzling out the unintelligible scribbling of educated *letrados*, the typesetter was the one who, in a reversal of the normative flow of knowledge production, had to “transform material work into works of intelligence.”³ In addition to enduring the meddlesome, counterproductive corrections of the various proofreaders, editors, and authors involved in production, the typesetter often found himself blamed for the very errors he had tried to fix. Adding insult to injury, he was

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¹ “El Cajista,” *El Socialista*, June 13, 1875. “Sabeis lo que es un cajista? Si consideramos al cajista únicamente como el oficial de imprenta que junta y ordena las letras para componer lo que se le da, el cajista no es otra cosa que el operario que reduce al trabajo material lo que es obra de la inteligencia; pero si consideramos al verdadero cajista, al hombre que pasa dos tercios de su vida parando los pensamientos ajenos, recorriendo y justificando las pruebas antes de poder descifrar la letra de tanto escritor, articulista, remitidista, redactor y cronista, la cosa cambia de aspecto.”
² Ibid. “a todos les ha dado forma y vida.”
³ Ibid. “transformar el trabajo material en trabajo de inteligencia.”
forced to endure the writings of “those who instead of writing, should learn how to read!”\(^4\)

This article represents one of many fora in which, after the triumph of liberal governments under Benito Juárez and his successor Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, Mexico City’s printing world began to draw its own portrait as it grew in scope and scale. The expansion of urban printing—imperfect statistics suggest Mexico City’s labor force quadrupled from 330 printers in 1879 to 1,219 in 1890—roughly paralleled the consolidation of a more powerful national state under the thirty year tenure of Porfirio Díaz, who came to power after overthrowing the government of Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada in the 1876 Revolution of Tuxtepec.\(^5\) Díaz’s coup culminated a decade of increasingly contested liberal politics and marked the beginning of a period of relative stability—especially in Mexico City itself—that paved the way for government-sponsored industrialization (achieved through foreign investment) and economic integration and growth.\(^6\)

\(^4\) Ibid. “de los que en lugar de escribir deberían aprender a leer!”

\(^5\) Porter, \textit{Working Women in Mexico City}, 11; Dirección General de Estadística, \textit{Estadística general de la república mexicana, á cargo del Dr. Antonio Peñafiel.}, vol. 6 (Mexico City: Oficina Tipográfica de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1892), 902. Statistics that counted the number of printshops may be even more unreliable. While Sonia Pérez Toledo counts 45 shops in 1842 and 58 in 1865, Carlos Illades identifies 21 in 1865 and Susie Porter counts 33 in 1879. The decline by 1879 might reflect a consolidation into a smaller number of larger shops. Sonia Pérez Toledo, \textit{Trabajadores, espacio urbano y sociabilidad en la ciudad de México, 1790-1867} (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Iztapalapa / Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2011), 81; Illades, \textit{Hacia la república del trabajo}, 31.

Porfirian officials pursued progress through what Charles Hale has termed “scientific politics,” which argued, adapting French positivist ideas, “that the country’s problems should be approached and its policies formed scientifically.” This philosophy of “more administration and less politics,” which gained attention in the late 1870s and eventually supplanted traditional liberalism amongst Mexico’s governing elite, could be identified even earlier with the establishment of the government printshop. While up-and-coming intellectuals like Justo Sierra debated the new directions of liberal politics in the political press, an expanding swath of printers—especially small proprietors and typesetters—participated in their own public discussions over the meanings and directions of liberalism and the possibilities it offered for social advancement.

In technological terms, the printing industry had changed relatively little since midcentury, when the city’s largest shops incorporated mechanical printing presses powered by animals or (more rarely) steam. Iron hand presses and, increasingly, jobbing presses, imported from U.S. and European manufacturers, sped the printing process by automating ink distribution and easing the physical force required to make an impression. By the turn of the century, printing presses—even individually operated platen jobbing presses—had been motorized in large shops. Typesetting, the branch that utilized the largest labor force, however, remained unchanged until the turn of the twentieth century,

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7 Hale, The Transformation of Liberalism, 27.
8 Ibid., 31.
9 On Sierra’s journalistic and subsequent career as Minister of Education, see ibid.; Piccato, The Tyranny of Opinion; Mary Kay Vaughan, The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880-1928 (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1982).
when the adoption of linotype radically reconfigured the printing trades. Typesetters,
therefore, benefitted the most as markets for print and government funding for printing
projects expanded during the 1870s.

Typesetters’ discussions paralleled the growth of urban mutualism—a form of
association through which workers pooled financial resources to offer aid to members—in
the 1870s and 1880s.11 Whether trade-specific conversations started in the city’s
mutualist meeting halls, workshops, or cantinas, they were channeled in the writings of a
smaller number of leaders who published in the artisan press. Semi-serious articles like
“The Typesetter” encouraged such reflection: indeed, the article described the ideal
typesetter as “a man who from time to time puts down the composing stick to make use
of the writer’s pen,” and cited several Mexico City individuals—Juan Serrano, Vidal
Hernández, Luis G. Iza, Manuel Gallo, and Luis G. Rubin—as outstanding examples.12
Writing, in turn, could lead to social advancement. “The typesetter, in short,” finished the
article, “is a man who, starting with manipulating type, the brush and the proofing
cylinder, can manage to become a newspaper editor, writer, etc.”13

The 1870s represented a moment in which intellectual discussions crossed social
boundaries, a phenomenon that could be traced in the artisan press. This chapter
examines how printers navigated their social position under Mexico’s triumphant but

11 On mutualist organization, see Illades, Hacia la república del trabajo; Lear, Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens.
12 “El cajista,” El Socialista, June 13, 1875. “un hombre que deja de vez en cuando el componedor para hacer uso de la pluma de escritor.”
13 Ibid. “El cajista, en fin, es un hombre que empezando por manejar los tipos, el cepillo y el cilindro de pruebas, puede llegar a ser redactor de periódicos, escritor, etc.”
contested liberal regime by examining the dense expressive world of printing culture alongside daily life on the shop floor. As skilled, literate workers in a moment when industrialization, progress, and the administration of society increasingly preoccupied elites, printers offered their own take on the situation facing their trade, sometimes in contradictory analyses that emerged out of their specific experiences. While some printers positioned themselves as a vanguard with the ability to uplift fellow workers, however, others distanced themselves from their laboring milieu, instead highlighting their relationship to words and ideas.

Although marginalized within the broader world of urban intellectual production, printshop workers clearly aspired to be recognized as full members. This chapter examines how printers themselves diagnosed their social challenges and contested boundaries policed by elites—both in the artisan press and on the job. After reconstructing shop life in the government printshop, it considers how printers constructed visions of their relationship to intellectual life that emerged out of and moved beyond working conditions. It then examines a unique type specimen booklet prepared by typesetters to show how printers negotiated their place in emerging bureaucratic hierarchies and presented superiors with demands for greater recognition. These demands and other proposals reveal that printers mobilized liberalism—which they construed as past, present and future—to make both immediate demands and broader claims on the city’s world of intellectual production.

A well-oiled machine? Wages, Hierarchies, and Printshop Authority

By 1870, Mexico’s government printshop functioned like a well-oiled machine, or at least so it appeared if the meticulous accounting records kept under director José María Sandoval are read at face value. Sandoval’s records, compiled weekly and submitted monthly, satisfied superiors in the Ministry of the Interior, suggesting he had established a successful work rhythm after three years in charge. Yet under careful scrutiny, Sandoval’s records offer a window into the social organization of printshop life, where conditions for workers were less stable than the orderly account books initially suggest.

Inside the printshop, different workers labored in rooms separated from the semi-private offices of Sandoval and Darío Balandrano, the director of the Diario Oficial, the government gazette. Typesetters worked in one of four composition rooms, while those running the clattering, mule-powered printing presses worked in a pressroom suffused with animal and chemical smells. Proof readers kept separate quarters, while the office’s cleaners and newspaper folders moved through the shop’s divided spaces, sweeping dust and carrying stacks of paper from the press room to the newspaper folding table located in a corner of the director’s office.15

Most IGF workers, including its directors, editorial staff, proofreaders, machinists, press assistants and cleaners received a fixed salary, paid out on a weekly basis. Compared to its imperial predecessor, the republican printshop paid lower wages (except to the director), which were also distributed with greater inequality. (Figure 19)

15 Reconstruction of the IGF’s space comes from an inventory. AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1305, box 2, exp. 2 #107, November, 1870.
While in 1866, the imperial printshop paid full-time typesetters a fixed annual salary, by 1870, typesetters earned their pay through piecework. Thus, while pay varied according to skill, job type and experience for many of the IGF’s workers, typesetters navigated a different set of work rhythms.

![Annual Salaries, Imprenta del Gobierno, 1870](image)

*Figure 19: Annual Salaries, Imprenta del Gobierno, 1870.*
Source: AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1305, box 2, exp. 1, old file #136; legajo 1305, box 2, exp. 2, old file #55.

Typesetters working at the IGF reported to the National Palace, where the office opened at seven in the morning, to receive assignments. From week to week, individual

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16 Reglamento para la Imprenta del Supremo Gobierno, Dublán and Lozano, *Legislación mexicana*, XII, 516.
typesetters could expect to earn neither steady nor equal wages, and the shop’s rates for piecework remained stagnant over thirty years.\textsuperscript{17} Wage data shows that managers played an important role in distributing printshop tasks, assigning individual typesetters to complete individual projects rather than spreading work around equally.\textsuperscript{18} While setting type for official imprints like ministerial circulars, decrees, regulations and edicts earned a better rate, the most wages could be made by setting type for the government gazette, which employed between six and eight typesetters paid on a schedule pegged to batches of one hundred lines of type.\textsuperscript{19} (Appendix A)

Across the board, typesetters in the IGF worked far below full capacity. While they tended to average 200-300 lines in a day, the fastest typesetters could exceed 1,200 lines.\textsuperscript{20} Over three days in December, for example, the typesetter Fernández set 2,444 lines of time for the sizable pay of seventeen pesos.\textsuperscript{21} Those who could set the smallest types the fastest earned the best pay, and this honor typically fell to a single individual in

\textsuperscript{17} Compiled from available IGF records for the years 1875, 1880, 1883, 1884, 1888, 1895, 1900: All AGN, Gobernación: legajo 1322 box 2, exp. 1-5 (Jan-Dec 1875); legajo 945, exp. 1-2 (Jan-Dec 1880), exp. 3 (Jan 1883); sin sección, caja 639, exp. 10-3 (June-Aug 1884); sin sección, caja 654, exp. 3-1 (Nov-Dec 1888); sin sección, caja 782, exp. 2 (Feb 1895); sin sección, caja 747, exp. 2-3 (March 1900).
\textsuperscript{19} For example, setting a single circular of 32 lines earned 3.125 cents per line, for a rate of approximately 312 cents per hundred, three to six times the newspaper rate of between 50 and 87.5 cents per hundred.
\textsuperscript{20} Unlike in the U.S., Mexico appears not to have shared in the phenomenon of competitive typesetting, perhaps because of the more circumscribed market for print. As a result, I have found no commentaries on the average or maximum output of typesetters, statistics that abound for the U.S. context. In the U.S., typesetters were paid by the “em,” a typographic measurement standard that allowed workers to tie a “string around the block of type they had set, measured it, and [be] paid accordingly.” Walker Rumble, The Swifts: Printers in the Age of Typesetting Races (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 22-23.
\textsuperscript{21} AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1322, exp. 1, no. 82, fol. 35.
the shop: in 1875, José María Sierra—also employed as the *formador* (compaginator) responsible for arranging all the type for the gazette—earned top wages, specializing in setting the smallest 8-point type. Sierra most likely earned these wages in addition to his yearly salary as the formador, which paid 360 pesos. Furthermore, the formador earned an extra peso each week for tracking the labor and calculating the wages of his fellow typesetters. Typesetters both inside the IGF and out vied for plum positions like that of formador. When Sierra died, not only internal candidates but also city typesetters had written to apply for the post, just one day after the formador’s death.\(^{22}\) His replacement—hand-picked by the director of the gazette—went on to earn some of the highest wages on the shop floor.\(^{23}\)

The various branches of the typesetting department—divided into four rooms for the *Diario Oficial* and other specializations—were supposed to be overseen by a head typesetter, a manager responsible for subaltern workers, their labor, and conduct.\(^{24}\) This delegation of responsibility meant that favored typesetters might have greater latitude in distributing tasks amongst fellow workers, adding further complexity to workplace relationships. Significant resources might be at stake, as typesetters in the IGF had the potential to earn ample pay in short spans of time when work was available. For example, assigned to a particularly labor-intensive job during one week in August of 1872, Manuel Aburto earned 184 pesos, roughly six times the printshop director’s weekly pay and twice

\(^{22}\) AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1322, exp. 2, no. 102. Avelino Serna, Manuel Aburto, Tomás Vazquez and Carlos Larrea all applied for the job.

\(^{23}\) Tomás Vazquez. AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1322, exp. 1, no. 82, fol. 34.

\(^{24}\) Dublán and Lozano, *Legislación mexicana*, XII, 516-517.
the yearly pay of a shop cleaner.\textsuperscript{25} Yet median typesetter pay fluctuated between five and twenty pesos per week for those working on either official imprints or the government gazette.\textsuperscript{26}

Perhaps because the IGF did not offer enough work, it experienced relatively high turnover. Indeed, of the forty-four typesetter names listed in wage data in 1870, 1872 and 1875, only three individuals appear in all three years. The IGF was a printshop where workers came and went. Although records are incomplete, they strongly suggest that some typesetters dropped in to pick up occasional work, while others were replaced or left of their own accord. Typesetters may have left the IGF in search of a more lenient work atmosphere. The IGF’s rules contained several points that touched on worker behavior, recalling a set of shop rules published by Ignacio Cumplido—notorious for his fastidiousness towards workshop culture—in the 1840s.\textsuperscript{27} As the IGF rules made clear in language typical of prescriptive literature, “In the establishment, cleanliness, order and morality shall reign always.”\textsuperscript{28} Any outsiders wishing to do business with the shop’s

\textsuperscript{25} Aburto single-handedly set 276 pages (34.5 pliegos, or double-sided sheets printed in quarto) of type that week, for the upcoming fiscal year’s Ley de presupuestos de ingresos y egresos de la federación (1872-1873). AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1280, exp. 3 (old file #155). The printshop director, in 1870, earned approximately 30 pesos per week, while the cleaner earned 96 in a year. Gobernación, Legajo 1305, box 2, exp. 1.

\textsuperscript{26} Unfortunately, incomplete pay records make it impossible to determine IGF workers’ total wages. Work on the Diario Oficial (where typesetters are listed by name) accounts for only roughly half of total wages paid for typesetting during 1875. Worker-specific records for the other half (for other official imprints) apparently have not survived. Where they do for the 1872 (with Diario Oficial records missing), composition weekly averages range between 2 and rarely exceeded 20 pesos per week, revealing an equal practice of distributing labor amongst multiple typesetters.

\textsuperscript{27} Cumplido, Reglamento provisional. Cumplido’s fastidiousness regarding his printshop is discussed in Prieto, Memoria de mis tiempos 1828 a 1853; Bishop, Travels of Anna Bishop in Mexico, 69.

\textsuperscript{28} Dublán and Lozano, Legislación mexicana, XII, 516-517: “En el establecimiento reinará siempre el aseo, el orden y la moralidad.”
printers were instructed to visit them at home, during off-hours, “since, in the printshop it shall not be permitted that they be spoken to.” Workers could be dismissed for violating any of a number of infractions, including talking to outsiders and bringing liquor or gambling accouterments to work. Both ministry officials and the shop director could fire workers who violated any of the shop rules.

Although the shop rules were not published until 1873, José María Sandoval clearly exercised his authority as director from the beginning. Workers depended to some degree on the good will of the top administrator, as the case of one printer reveals. In late 1869, Ramón Arce, calling himself a press operator in the IGF, had his brother Francisco write a petition to the Ministry of the Interior for a raise. Ramón had been receiving 50 cents a day, “given to me with some repugnancy, due to the fact that it has not been possible for me to continue the same duties for having fractured my right arm in the [IGF’s] press.” Skating over the details of what might have been a gruesome industrial accident, Arce petitioned the minister for an increase to his disability pay, calling himself a “poor artisan,” deserving of support “while I recover from the injuries occasioned by my laborious work.”

When officials asked Sandoval to report on the best action to take, he explained that Arce “is not a salaried employee of this printshop: to benefit him he was admitted as

29 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1305, box 2, exp. 1, no. 7, January, 1870. “fin la que se me ministraban 50 centavos diarios los que con alguna repugnancia se me dan, en razón a que no me ha sido posible continuar los mismos quehaceres por haberme fracturado el brazo derecho en la prensa de la misma oficina estando trabajando como lo puede acreditar el C Administrador Sandoval.”
30 Ibid. “un pobre artesano,” “entre tanto me alivio de mis males ocacionados por mi laborioso trabajo.”
a temporary worker, assigned 50 cents a day for his work.”\textsuperscript{31} Far from a hapless victim, Sandoval cast Arce as an opportunist, who, in the month and a half since fracturing his arm, “has not failed to perceive his due for even one day,” and who “presently has an advance on his salary for the [coming] week.”\textsuperscript{32} Furthermore, Arce was offered “assistance of the professors of the Military Doctors’ Corp, and by my recommendation the necessary medicines, which he did not accept.”\textsuperscript{33} In short, Arce took advantage of and later rejected the paternalistic assistance extended by Sandoval in a “spirit of philanthropy,” which the director deemed more than sufficient. “My opinion,” he ended, “is that the 50 cents that Arce is receiving, and that have been ministered without repugnancy, are sufficient to alleviate in some manner his disgrace, given that he has become worthless through his own printing.”\textsuperscript{34}

Four months after ministry officials upheld Sandoval’s recommendation, Ramón Arce sent a second letter, this time signed under his own name (although possibly written by his brother), explaining that “Sandoval out of hatred that I do not understand looks upon me with much odiousness since not only has he not wanted to aid me, but he has even thrown me out of the [printing] office.”\textsuperscript{35} Responding to Arce’s charges, Sandoval

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid. “El expresado Arce no es empleado de los de planta de esta imprenta: por hacerle bien se le admitió como trabajador eventual, asignándole por su trabajo 50 c. diarios.”
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid. “y en todo ese tiempo no ha dejado de percibir su haber ni un solo dia; antes bien, se le ha dado con preferencia, y al presente tiene adelantado el sueldo de la semana que termina el 7 del actual”
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid. “Ademas, se le ha atendido con toda eficacia, proporcionándole la asistencia de los profesores del Cuerpo Médico Militar, y por mi recomendación las medicinas necesarias, que no aceptó.”
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid. “Mi opinión es que los 50 es diarios que está recibiendo Arce, y que se le han ministrado sin repugnancia, bastan para aliviar de alguna manera su desgracia, supuesto que se ha inutilizado por impresion suya.”
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. “José M. Sandoval por odios que no comprendo me mira con bastante odiosidad pues aun no solo no me ha querido socorrer, sino aun me ha arrojado de la oficina.”
\end{flushright}
explained that after four months he had called Arce in, “having learned that he was already better and that he only occupied himself in going to the pulquerías and strolling about, according to members of his own family.”\(^{36}\) When Arce presented himself some days later, Sandoval explained, he had put him to work at various tasks, only to find Arce coming and going at his pleasure and hiding under furniture and in private spots to evade work. Disputing Arce’s account of his firing, Sandoval explained that he had appeared in the evening—after coming out from hiding—“claiming with arrogance that he wanted to retire to rest in spite of not having worked all afternoon.”\(^{37}\) The conversation escalated and Sandoval fired Arce, advising him to take up his complaints with superiors.

Ministry officials supported Sandoval’s version of events, revealing the limits of Arce’s strategic deployment of everyday resistance, including both the disputed acts of work evasion and his direct appeal to his boss’s superiors.\(^{38}\) Sandoval’s story, furthermore, played on familiar tropes used to characterize vagrancy—frequenting drinking establishments, wandering the streets without purpose, shirking responsibilities—that resonated with social policies that had targeted Mexico City’s urban poor for several decades.\(^{39}\) When it came to individual shop floor disputes, administrators clearly had the upper hand.

\(^{36}\) Ibid. “por haber sabido que ya estaba bueno y que solo se ocupaba de andar en las pulquerías y paseándose, según el dicho de personas de su misma familia.”

\(^{37}\) Ibid. “después se presentó manifestando con altanería que quería retirarse a descansar a pesar de no haber trabajado en toda la tarde.”


\(^{39}\) See, for example, Pérez Toledo, *Los hijos del trabajo;* Vanesa E. Teitelbaum, *Entre el control y la mobilización. Honor, trabajo y solidaridades artesanales en la ciudad de México a mediados del siglo XIX* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2008).
Analyzing the Printer’s Place

On the job, printers navigated patronage relationships with superiors and competed for resources. They also formed connections that cut across the divisions of labor drawn within the shop. In 1870, for example, Andrés Clemente Vazquez, a Cuban writer and chess master, worked on the editorial staff of the government gazette. Several years later, the writer had become a member of the Mutual Aid Society of Printers, and served on the editorial staff of the society’s newspaper, *La Firmeza*. The link between the Cuban writer—who published his chess column on the back page of the typographers’ journal and contributed bland summaries of the association’s activities—and typesetters surely formed through interactions at the IGF.

Printers also cultivated ties, both real and imagined, to Mexico City intellectuals in the pages of the artisan press, which flourished in the 1870s alongside mutualism. More specialized newspapers like the short-lived *La Firmeza* (1874) and *La Imprenta* (1884) emerged in connection with mutualist organizations that focused on the printing trades (*La Firmeza* represented the Sociedad “Socorros Mutuos de Impresores and *La Imprenta* had ties to the Sociedad “Impresores Libres”), but printers also contributed to

40 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1305, box 2, exp. 2, July, 1870.
41 *La Firmeza*, April 15, 1874.
the broader artisan press to offer earnest analysis of both material and social conditions. These contributions blended commentary on local trade concerns—for example, bad treatment or payday problems in a particular shop—with sweeping analysis of the Mexican printer’s situation.43 Articles in the artisan press worked to dispel longstanding elite caricatures of printers rooted in decades of distrust. Typesetters in particular had become something of a literary trope, blamed in newspaper articles whenever an error had been printed (“the typesetter made us say…”), or invoked to undermine the soundness of a rival’s line of argumentation.44 They had also been satirized, in articles and, most memorably, the 1854 costumbrista volume Los mexicanos pintados por sí mismos. The illustrated vignette of the typesetter—depicted in a lithograph as a working class dandy who plays at higher status by adopting the sartorial trappings of elite masculinity—showed its protagonist as a destabilizing social figure who might bring about the downfall of respectable society with typos. (Figure 20) Thus, articles in the artisan press written by typesetters worked to construct more dignified depictions.

43 One article criticized El Monitor Republicano for making typesetters stand around on the streets, thus damaging their reputation by making them appear to be vagrants. El Socialista, May 9, 1886. On attempts to lower typesetter pay at the IGF, see El Socialista, September 8, 1878.

44 The list of newspaper articles explicitly blaming typesetters is too long to cite. Some examples include Letter to the Editor, El Mosquito Mexicano, May 25, 1838, 4; “Pronunciamiento,” El Universal, August 1, 1850; “Corrección,” El Siglo Diez y Nueve, August 3, 1861; “Erratas,” El Monitor Republicano, December 26, 1867.
Typesetter writings mapped out social relationships between printers, with shop owners, and—most importantly—with intellectuals and the world of literate production. These constructions of horizontal and vertical ties took a variety of forms: from discussion of mutualist organization business, descriptions of their annual galas, or notices of member illness or death; to expressions of thanks directed at printshop owners who subsidized the production of printer newspapers; to accolades directed at renowned...
journalists and intellectuals who showed sympathy towards the printers’ plight. Thus in 1875, La Firmeza welcomed Cuban exile José Martí, who arrived in Mexico after completing studies in Spain, explaining “we congratulate ourselves for counting one gladiator more amongst our ranks.” It also highlighted the addition of poet Agapito Silva and writer Daniel Chávez, “known and intelligent literatos,” to La Firmeza’s editorial staff. When famed writer and journalist Ignacio M. Altamirano gave the keynote speech at the second anniversary party of the Sociedad “Socorros Mutuos de Impresores,” La Firmeza reproduced his message in full after it had heaped accolades upon the “praiseworthy patrician” and compared him to Cynea, the gifted ambassador of the Greek statesman Pyrrhus of Epirus.

The artisan press regularly included contributions from invited guests and professional writers alongside excerpts from local and international periodicals that offered outside perspectives, which often pulled against the discursive imaginations constructed by printers themselves. One 1875 edition of La Firmeza revealed the tensions between the multiple voices that shared space in the printers’ newspaper. On the front

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45 When a typesetter fell ill, his compañeros might write to the editorial staff asking for a collection to be taken up for his benefit. El Socialista, February 23, 1873; In the case of a death, funeral announcements lamented that the city’s ranks were now “one typographer less.” El Socialista, March 9, 1873; “Un tipógrafo menos,” May 17, 1874; May 20, 1874; May 22, 1875. If a successful printshop owner allowed his workers to borrow a press and type to produce a weekly magazine, as was the case for Alfredo Bablot who subsidized El Socialista in its early years, the newspaper text publicized its thanks in appreciative articles. “El Socialista y la prensa,” El Socialista, July 13, 1873
46 La Firmeza, February 20, 1875. “nos congratulamos en contar en nuestras filas con un gladiador mas.”
47 La Firmeza, March 20, 1875.
48 El Socialista, January 23, 1875. “digno patricio.” Altamirano’s speech offered printers a lesson in Mexico’s history of association: while it critiqued the colonial guilds as the instruments of despotism, the speech lauded the association of free individuals under the liberal order as a salutary check “against the inconsiderate capitalist.” El Socialista, February 13 and 20, 1875.
page, the writer Lorenzo Agoitia submitted a bland editorial praising mutualist organization and the fraternal bonds it created outside of the workshop. “All of this contributes powerfully to the enlightenment of the worker,” he explained, who is on track to one day compare “on par with workers from the most civilized countries.”49 Clearly writing from an elevated social position, Agoitia saw Mexican workers only as being able to aspire to reach the level of European counterparts.

Inside the fold, Juan N. Serrano—Mexico City’s most respected typesetter—offered a more powerful critique of the situation facing Mexico’s printers. “What today is an artisan? …What today is a printer? … What future awaits the unfortunate typesetter, that standing all day in front of a type cabinet, exhausting his physical and moral forces, can only make out a dark and miserable future, since his difficult labor leads to, same as for the press operator, chest illness, loss of vision, moral decay, nothingness? ….”50

Serrano argued that the nature of printers’ labors made them unique in their suffering. Unlike other artisans, “who need nothing more than honor and constancy to make themselves owners of their will,” printers were “slaves to work and society day and night,” vulnerable to changing politics and the fortunes of the state.51 The situation was made worse by their personal awareness: “How often the exercise of our profession

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49 Juan N. Serrano, “Nuestra sociedad,” *La Firmeza*, January 30, 1875. “Todo esto contribuye poderosamente a la ilustración del obrero, que puede decirse muy bien, que está en la mejor vía de llegar a ponerse en esa línea a la altura de los obreros de los países mas civilizados.”

50 Ibid. “¿Qué es hoy un artesano?…..¿Qué es hoy un impresor?….¿Qué porvenir le espera al desgraciado cajista, que parado todo el día frente a un peinazo, agotando sus fuerzas físicas y morales, solo puede entrever un porvenir oscuro y miserable, puesto que su pesado ejercicio le acarrea, lo mismo que al prensista, la enfermedad de pecho, la pérdida de la vista, el decaimiento moral, la nada?……”

51 Ibid. “esclavos del trabajo y de la sociedad día y noche,”
suggests to us ideas of progress! How often our brow, feverish from the same ideas, that upon translating them to paper via the strenuous labor it costs us, darkens and is humiliated, making us look with indifference and even scorn upon the art that gives us the meager bread with which we sustain ourselves! How often also, the same enlightenment that we receive from the art only serves to make us see our unfortunate destiny as more inhumane, more cruel, more tyrannical.”

Serrano’s piece excoriated the city’s typographers for their inability to better their lot, given their superior access to empowering ideas. Printers should change their miserable situation, he argued, “for natural reason; for being the machines which with most force scatter in all directions the light of civilization; for being, with our abnegation and our corporeal and intellectual work, the ones chosen to display progress to the world, given that without us the genius of illustrious men would smash against impotence.”

Serrano’s impassioned appeal for change rested on an understanding of printers’ unique situation that adopted and also pushed against broader hierarchical notions of manual and intellectual labor. On the one hand, it used the denigrating printer-as-machine trope, yet also suggested that printers undertook not just manual but also intellectual labor. In fact,

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52 Ibid. “¡Cuántas veces el ejercicio de nuestra profesión nos sugiere ideas de progreso! ¡Cuantas veces nuestra frente calenturienta por las mismas ideas, que al trasladarlas al papel por medio del improbo trabajo que nos cuesta, se oscurece y se humilla, haciéndonos ver con indiferencia y aun con desprecio, al arte que nos proporciona el mezquinísimo pan con que nos sustentamos! ¡Cuántas veces también, la misma luz que recibimos del arte, solo nos sirve para hacernos comprender más inhumano, mas cruel, mas tirano nuestro desgraciado destino!”

53 Ibid. “Por razón natural; por ser las máquinas que con mas fuerza esparcen en toda dirección la luz de la civilización; por ser, con nuestra abnegación y nuestro trabajo corporal e intelectual los escogidos para demostrar la marcha al mundo, puesto que sin nosotros el genio de los hombres ilustres se estrellaría ante la impotencia.”
intellectuals would be impotent without printer efforts, a proposal that suggested that elite men owed their manliest attribute—the ability to generate and disseminate ideas—to this downtrodden group.

Drawing out social hierarchies, Serrano argued that printers bore a greater burden than other artisans: knowledge of enlightened ideas. Yet this privileged status, at once a point of pride, became a source of frustration and disempowerment in the face of obstacles: why, given their access to “ideas of progress,” could printers themselves not progress in moral and material terms? Serrano laid the blame squarely at printers’ own feet: self interest over the common good, notorious absenteeism at work “and, especially, Monday,” the day reserved for suffering Sunday’s hangover. Printers, he argued, dishonored the “extremely noble objective of our profession.” Printing represented enlightenment itself, and if printers wanted “to be the apostles of social progress”—and, Serrano briefly mentioned, earn more money—they needed to live up to the honor, which meant upholding their end of the principle of “legal contract, without restriction, of capital and labor.”

Serrano characterized printers as a vice-ridden group who failed to advance in spite of their contact with erudite materials. Although impossible to determine whether Serrano correctly diagnosed the trade’s problems or had internalized elite assumptions about printers and their lack of moral fiber, his suggestions for advancement reproduced broader discourses of mutualism—which skirted sustained engagement with the

54 Ibid. “ser los apóstoles del progreso social”; “contrato legal, sin restricción, del capital y el trabajo.”

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economics of printing in favor of a moral analysis— with a distinctive printer’s twist. Others echoed Serrano’s interpretation. The typesetter Jesus Laguna labeled typesetters “interpreters of thought,” and “children of Guttenberg, (sic)” and called on fellows to manifest their natural superiority as a vanguard in the “regeneration of the worker.”

Yet not all printers shared Serrano and Laguna’s diagnosis of moral inadequacy. Others highlighted their connections to enlightenment as innate proof of the trade’s greatness and implied that the only thing lacking was a more general recognition of this characteristic. Articles written by typographers claimed connections to the glorious legacy of Gutenberg, as in “Workers of the Light,” by twenty-four year old typesetter Luis Alva, who argued for printers’ status as the most important of workers, being “sculptors of thought and ideas, carried by the ministry of their hands to far-away distances and remote generations.”

If printers constructed close ties to enlightenment and progress, they recognized the limits of their claims on these categories. The acrostic poem, “Lira Tipográfica,” signed by an anonymous Typesetter’s Apprentice and dedicated to the typesetter and editor of El Socialista Juan de Mata Rivera, celebrated Gutenberg’s legacy and linked it to the labors of printers. The poem’s third stanza (the final acrostic of three reading GUTTENBERG, LA IMPRENTA, EL IMPRESOR) reads:

56 According to the 1879 census, Alva was born 1860. AHDF, Padrones, Municipalidad de México, vol. 3423. “Los obreros de la luz,” La Imprenta, June 1, 1884. “escultores del pensamiento y de la idea, llevados por el ministerio de sus manos a luengas distancias y a remotas generaciones.”
57 “Lira Tipográfica,” La Imprenta, May 25, 1884.
He is the instrument of progress,
Farmer that pays it tribute;
Intelligent and invisible
Miner (? illeg.) of thought;
Through his type case to the wind
Speeds the fecund idea
Spreads its light that streams
Across time and man!
Worker, obscure is your name,
Redemptive your task!

Es del progreso instrumento,
Labrador que le da culto;
Inteligente y oculto
Minero (? illeg.) del pensamiento;
Por él de su caja al viento
Rauda la fecunda idea
Esparce su luz que ondea
Sobre los tiempos y el hombre!
Obrero, oscuro es tu nombre,
Redentora tu tarea!

Comparing printers to farmers casting seeds, the poem decenters the author by establishing the printer as the heroic spreader of ideas. Yet it emphasizes the printer’s under-appreciated status (presumably in contrast to the author’s) by describing this figure as hidden, unknown and unrecognized. This hidden quality of the labor of printing, the poem suggests, offers redemption (perhaps of a religious nature) to those who practice it. Others echoed this perspective with more forcefulness, describing printers as the “hidden
workers and unknown collaborators of the intellectual progress of the country,” and calling on them to associate to improve their education and social capital.58

Although printers took up the same concerns over and over again, their self-analysis tended towards contradictory assessments on several central themes of discussion. While some commentators described the anguish of being a literate worker unable to capitalize on this valuable skill, others decried printers’ illiteracy in spite of their daily contact with words.59 While some blamed external forces for the printer’s material stagnation, others pointed to the trade’s own lack of moral fiber as the source. Although many commentaries offered synchronic surveys of Mexico City’s industry, others constructed (often mythical) narrative histories with opposing trajectories. Some charted a narrative of decline from a glorious past, as in one article that dreamed of restored glory, reprinting the Holy Roman Emperor’s decree granting special privileges—especially the right to carry swords, wear gold and use coats of arms—to Gutenberg and his collaborators (including typesetters) in 1471.60 Others saw improvement over time from dark days and looked hopefully to a brighter future.61 These swings in analysis—often expressed in different articles within a single newspaper edition—spoke not only to a diversity of opinion but also to a general dissatisfaction amongst the typesetters who

58 “Bajo qué bases deben asociarse los tipógrafos.” La Imprenta, June 22, 1884. “oscuros operarios, y desconocidos colaboradores del progreso intelectual del país.”
59 For example, “La enseñanza industrial,” La Imprenta, May 25, 1884.
61 “Los obreros de la luz,” June 1, 1884.
surveyed the field. They also revealed the difficulties in resolving the tensions embodied by the printer’s labor status through these diverse perspectives.

**Making Claims on the Job**

If printers shared their visions for a better situation in the press, few sources survive that speak to the unfolding of these ideas on the job. A unique type specimen book produced in 1877 in the Government Printshop is a remarkable example of printer discourse that offered a critical challenge to authority figures. Different in form and function than articles in the artisan press that exhorted fellow workers to better their own lot (and different from other, more conventional specimen books), the specimen represents rare preserved evidence of how ordinary workers attempted to communicate directly with superiors from the shop floor.

The source in question returns our attentions to the Government Printshop, which, in late 1876 was upended for the first time since its founding by a change in political power, when General Porfirio Díaz assumed the presidency after successfully overthrowing Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada in the Tuxtepec Rebellion. Over the previous nine years as the printshop’s founding director, José María Sandoval had clearly satisfied bureaucratic superiors and weathered one major political transition (to the Lerdo de Tejada administration after Juárez’s death in 1872), submitting detailed printshop inventories (in 1870 and 1873) for official review.62 His 1870 report also included an

62 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1305, exp. 2, no. 107. The second inventory process was overseen by pro-Lerdo journalist Hilarión Frias y Soto. Frias y Soto signed off on the inventory, which I have not been able to locate. Mentioned in AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1264, exp. 2, no. 67, fol. 3.
elegantly designed printed record of the shop’s type collection, presented in the form of four large broadsheets. Finding one or more typesetters to complete the extra work would have been easy, but Sandoval likely kept a watchful eye—perhaps dictating design parameters—as typesetters composed the *muestrario* that displayed the government’s typefaces in a clear, orderly, and utilitarian fashion. (Figure 21)

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63 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1305, exp. 2, no. 107, fols. 43-46.
The four unbound sheets submitted by Sandoval in 1870 can be described as examples of a type specimen, a non-standardized international genre that presents an encyclopedic view of a printshop’s (or type foundry’s) typographic offerings. In addition
to showcasing the stylistic qualities of multiple typefaces, a type specimen—particularly in nineteenth century Mexico when type designs and styles proliferated rapidly and were usually acquired piecemeal from distributors—also denoted the name, along with a reference number, which allowed the type style to be identified and located quickly inside the printshop. In midcentury Mexico City, several major printers—Mariano Galván Rivera, Ignacio Cumplido, José Mariano Fernández de Lara, and Rafael Rafael—had produced type specimens that displayed typefaces, vignettes, and decorative borders. As scholars of Mexican typography have noted, printers also used type specimens to convey other information to viewers, particularly for appealing to potential customers through graphic and textual performance: Cumplido’s used fragmentary news headlines, liberal-leaning content and up-to-date factoids to present his eye-catching typefaces; Fernández de Lara’s excerpted religious texts and re-printed his own name ad nauseam in a show of professional bravado; Rafael’s showed off his impressive multi-colored printing techniques. (Figure 22)

64 Although typographic naming systems varied widely across time and space, specimens necessarily followed some kind of systematic logic. For an analysis of type specimen books in the United States, see Alastair Johnston, *Alphabets to Order: the Literature of Nineteenth-century Typefounders’ Specimens* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2000).

65 *Muestra de los caracteres que hay en la imprenta de M. Galván a cargo de Mariano Arevalo,* (Mexico City: Calle de Cadena No. 2, 1827); *Tipo que contiene parte de los caracteres y demas útiles de la imprenta de la calle de los rebeldes num. 2, dirigida por Ignacio Cumplido,* (Mexico City: [Ignacio Cumplido], 1836); *Muestras de caracteres,* (Mexico City: Tipografía, polígrafia, y taller de grabado de R. Rafael y Balart, 1847); *Muestra de los caracteres de la imprenta de Don José M. Lara,* (Mexico City: [José M. Lara], 1855).

Figure 22: Examples of type specimens printed in Mexico City.
At left, a page from José Mariano Lara’s 1855 specimen; at right a spread from Ignacio Cumplido’s 1871 specimen.
Source: Biblioteca del Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey; Ignacio Cumplido, Establecimiento tipográfico de Ignacio Cumplido: libro de muestras.

Composed for bureaucratic superiors and not potential customers, the IGF’s muestrarios are significantly soberer than other surviving specimens. Framed by a frilly decorative border, they are boldly identified (with decorative and display-sized type) with the heading “Imprenta del Supremo Gobierno.” The two-column layout presents the printshop’s typefaces organized according to their location in the shop, with each typeface denoted with the corresponding caja (case) where it was stored (140 total).

Visually, the composition is spare and spacious, allowing each typeface room to stand uncluttered on its own. Each line is centered within the column, and there is general consistency in typographic choices across the four sheets. The printing quality is uniform, and the pressmen’s virtuosity is shown in their ability to print type with very thick areas
of black alongside type with very fine lines without compromising the quality of either. The utilitarian nature of the muestrarios predetermines the conclusions that can be drawn from these documents. Typefaces are presented in order according to their printshop locations, and are displayed in straightforward fashion by name. Clearly the result of a carefully planned process, they convey an overarching sense of professional competency and order, which Sandoval knew would reflect positively on his role as printshop director. One can imagine, furthermore, that these muestrarios would have been tacked to the wall in each of the four composition rooms, proof of the shop’s professionalism and supremacy over its world of letters—and perhaps just as importantly, handy aids for locating typefaces and making design choices.

While the muestrarios and Sandoval’s report satisfied superiors in 1870, by 1876, his political fortunes changed after General Porfirio Díaz took control of the national government. Within days of Díaz’s arrival in the National Palace, Sandoval and several other printshop workers had been replaced, the printshop’s directorial slate wiped clean. Perhaps the 1870 muestrarios, still tacked to the composition room walls, were the only remnant of his tenure. The impeccable order Sandoval had demanded—if we are to believe one of his several successors—was a casualty of his dismissal. In the following

67 Furthermore, Sandoval successfully defended himself against the accusations of Juan Pérez, the bureaucrat appointed to act as supervisor of the inventory process. Pérez, who Sandoval and Balandrano agreed had shirked his responsibilities by refusing to show up for the inspection, accused the director of willfully submitting an unauthorized inventory after refusing to weigh all the IGF’s type. Sandoval countered Pérez’s accusations, saying he had done the best he could without halting the presses altogether, and offered witnesses to vouch for Pérez’s own failure to do his duty. Gobernación officials accepted Sandoval and Balandrano’s explanations. AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1305, exp. 2, fols. 48-53.
68 Sandoval would go on to start his own printing business in Mexico City.
months, under the supervision of Minister of the Interior Protasio Pérez Tagle, the printshop experienced a reshuffling, with several high- and mid-levelhirings and resignations.\footnote{Director of the Diario Oficial Andrés Clemente Vazquez turned over his office to José Ponce de Leon, for example, who then resigned after just a week due to “the state of [his] health.” AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1264, exp. 3, old no. 0-03-no7.}

Printshop workers might have used the turnover to their advantage, quietly pilfering type and equipment, or relaxing the work rhythms maintained by Sandoval. This was the appraisal given by Filomeno Mata, an inexperienced administrator who was thrust into the position of IGF director in mid-December after his predecessor quit soon after being hired. After just a week on the job, Mata found his salary doubled when he was placed in charge of the entire printshop.\footnote{Ibid. Mata’s salary rose from 800 pesos a year to 1,500.} Within a month, his supervisor Pérez Tagle (himself a newly-minted bureaucrat) requested the inevitable accounting of the state of the printshop.

Mata knew he had to present his best face to his supervisors. As a young, ambitious man with shallow roots in the capitol city, he was aware that maintaining his position, acquired through patronage, required rising to the occasion—to make good on the personal connections he had already forged successfully, first in journalism, and then as a participant in Díaz’s Tuxtepec rebellion.\footnote{At the time of his appointment, Mata was 32. Mata had attained this post, like his supervisor Pérez Tagle, after supporting Díaz’s Tuxtepec rebellion, where he served as the secretary to General Rodríguez Bocardo during the previous year’s military campaign in Tlaxcala. Born into a peasant family in the interior state of San Luis Potosí, Mata had attained formal education in the state’s capitol with the support of his parents—a father who supplemented his sharecropping work as a muleteer, and a mother who pushed her son to better his lot. After an initial career in education led nowhere, Mata struck out for the capital, where he eventually linked up with Díaz’s cohort. His biography reveals his early-career connections with influential newspaper}
nascent regime, Mata had good reason to prepare his report with care. As a newcomer to the world of printing administration, however, he had little sense of how to proceed with his task and a narrow time window—approximately twenty days—to complete it.

Mata leaned heavily on his printshop subordinates—some of whom had remained during the government switch—to orient himself to the shop’s inner workings as he prepared to draft his report. Choosing his words carefully, Mata sat in his office to compose a narrative summary—starkly different than his predecessor’s 1870 list inventory—detailing his impressions, evaluation, and suggestions for improvement. The different reporting styles almost certainly reflected different experiences: while Sandoval, a printer by trade, had mastery over basic protocols like forming printshop inventories (a practice generally conducted for monetary evaluation that involved sorting and weighing type and describing machinery with precision), Mata’s familiarity with the world of print likely came from having spent time in shops in his capacity as a journalist in the employ of men like Ireneo Paz, who had published the anti-Lerdo newspaper Padre Cobos and was a Díaz supporter. Oddly, once the draft of his narrative was complete, Mata handed over his copy to the typesetting department. Unlike Sandoval, who submitted his

editors Vicente García Torres and Ireneo Paz, which surely facilitated his professional success. Luis I. Mata, Filomeno Mata (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1945), 14-15.

72 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1264, exp. 3, old no. 21/0-03. Mata’s report singles out Faustino Sánchez and Manuel López by name, with the honorific title “don,” as particularly exemplary employees. Mata’s recommendation might have paid off—in July Faustino Sánchez was confirmed as the “first pressman.”

73 Paz suffered imprisonment and exile during the Lerdo administration, which he described in his memoir Ireneo Paz, Algunas campañas, 2nd ed. (Mexico City: Imp. de I. Paz, 1884). On Paz’s political publishing activities, see Antonia Pi-Suñer Llorens, “Entre la historia y la novela. Ireneo Paz,” in La república de las letras: asomos a la cultura escrita del México decimonónico, ed. Belem Clark de Lara and Elisa Speckman (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005), 381-383.
inventory in handwritten form (indeed, unlike any other instance of routine bureaucratic correspondence that I have uncovered thus far), Mata chose to present his superiors with a printed document. The usual flowery, cramped, or slap-dashed scripts of previous printshop directors and bureaucratic functionaries were replaced in this single instance with the neat, regular forms of a script typeface, which itself mimicked, in stylized form, human handwriting. (Figure 23)

Imagine what the typesetter assigned to the job would have felt as he read over Mata’s report in the process of transforming the handwritten document into print, probably for the wage of 1 peso. The text was far from complementary, although most of the harshest criticisms were aimed at the former director, who was no longer in the picture. After a brief exculpatory introduction, apologizing for the imperfect nature of his report due to its hastily-compiled nature, Mata launched into his critical appraisal of the printshop. His first targets were the composition rooms—kingdoms of the typesetters. “This department,” Mata wrote, “has suffered much due to its state of abandonment.”74 Narrowing his scope of accusation, Mata proceeded to blame printshop employees for this lamentable state: “the final days of life of the past administration were fatal for this office,” he wrote, “as the workers, on pretext that the personnel was going to change, after printing several forms, did not proceed to distribute them, causing by this a jumble of different types” and requiring two journeymen’s exclusive labor to clean up this “most

74 AGN, Gobernación, Legajo 1264, exp. 3, old no. 21/0-03.
complete disarray.\textsuperscript{75} Here, he referenced a set of examples of all the typefaces contained within the printshop, which he submitted as proof positive of poor printshop conditions: “the types in general, as you will see in the examples (muestras) that I attach, are very abused.” The pressroom did not escape Mata’s critical eye either, receiving citation for “excessive abandonment,” due to a combination of worker laxity and directorial mismanagement.

Mata’s report, in sum, depicted the printshop as a place in need of reform, and positioned himself as the man for the job. Yet by choosing to have his hand-written report set in type and printed, Mata revealed its contents to the entire printshop—not just to his superiors in the Ministry of the Interior. Although new to the job, he surely understood that the shop would quickly become aware of his somewhat unflattering depiction, and appraised of his political maneuvers for prestige in the eyes of his superiors. At the same time, the leaking of the report’s contents generated a community of informed insiders amongst printshop workers of all kinds—while indirectly reminding Mata’s subordinates that he was in charge.

\textsuperscript{75} Mata argued that although the shop held a diversity of type, most of it was barely usable—there simply weren’t enough letters to complete a job (perhaps implying that someone had pilfered type along the way) and the leftovers were really only good for scrap metal. He advocates buying new type from the U.S. or England, offering a scheme to purchase new type financed with a sale of the old type to an internal public auction.
News of the content of Mata’s report must have spread quickly from one composition room to the entire shop. Perhaps workers accused Mata of exaggerating the state of the printshop to bolster his own image in the eyes of his superiors. Workers were surely not flattered by Mata’s suggestion—even if ultimately blamed on Sandoval—that they had failed in their duties but would have supported his request for funds to replace worn out equipment. Although the report portrayed the actions of printshop workers negatively, it ultimately exculpated their behavior by laying the final blame firmly on Sandoval. While difficult to assess whether IGF workers would have shared this negative
appraisal of their former boss, Sandoval himself had shown solidarity with the trade by joining the printer’s mutual aid society in 1873. Mata’s closing words left no doubt about his intentions to work with—rather than against—his subordinates: “It remains only for me to convey to the Ministry that the personnel of this office, without exception, complies exactly with their duties and sends their respects to their superiors.” Perhaps printshop workers weighed the positive and negative aspects of Mata’s finalized report in shop conversations as they moved about the space in their routine circuits or broke for the mid-day meal. Were their jobs in danger? Was Mata making peace or offering bureaucratic protection in exchange for their subordination and cooperation? Did he have to tarnish their reputations as skilled artisans in order to make his demands for increased funding to the Ministry, and were his insults to their professional honor and Sandoval’s legacy justified by the pursuit of better shop conditions for all?

When Mata instructed his employees to produce an accounting of the printshop’s typefaces, therefore, he unwittingly gave them the opportunity to offer their own commentary. New to his post, Mata likely relied on their professional know-how without offering much direction, perhaps handing the task to a typesetter who knew his way around the shop’s type cases, or maybe even to a newcomer who might have felt beholden to the new director. Perhaps, unaccustomed to the typical practice of assigning one small job to one individual, he set several typesetters to work on the same item to make the job move faster. One wonders whether the 1870 muestrario still circulated

76 “La Firmeza,” La Firmeza, April 15, 1874.
within the printshop as the typesetters went about composing the 1877 muestras. Did a tattered copy still hang on the wall, or had the sheets been stashed away somewhere after yellowing with age? Did any typesetters remain in the shop out of the group that had produced the earlier version?

In all likelihood, the typesetters decided to have a little fun: without a knowledgeable director like Sandoval to hold them accountable, they could experiment with the form and content of their type specimen, and not be overly concerned with producing a perfect specimen, which was a more tedious affair. Maybe corners could be cut. After all, who needed a numbering system when they knew their way around the type cabinets well enough? Perhaps annoyed with Mata or eager to exercise creative control, they saw this as an opportunity to offer a counter position to his printed report. Undoubtedly, some typesetters had seen the type catalogues produced in Mexico City shops or imported from the United States by the Bruce foundry, which played with the genre of the specimen to delightful effect.77

Cooked up by the typesetters themselves, the 1877 muestras—a professionally useless document in contrast to the 1870 muestrarios—instead directly addressed bureaucratic superiors in line after line of erudite references, witty slogans, and thinly veiled demands. (Figure 24) These demands underscored and amplified Mata’s own calls

77 Type Specimens from the U.S., in this time period, often followed a similar jocular format, reprinting news snippets, nonsensical fragments, printshop cosmologies, self-promotional slogans, etc. From Sandoval’s report, we know that the IGF owned type from the Bruce Foundry, one of the major type foundries in the U.S. in the nineteenth century. For an example of Bruce’s jocular specimens, see An abridged specimen of printing types, made at Bruce's New York type-foundry, (New York: George Bruce's Son & Co., 1869).
for greater printshop resources. In this sense, the document was less about worker resistance than about appropriation and agreement. But the muestras also communicated a message, which tested the limits of acceptable genre conventions to claim and convey mastery over a cultural capital not normally ascribed by elites to practitioners of the skilled and manual trades. Such a privilege, after all, was generally reserved for men like Mata who had the opportunity to compose and convey lengthy narratives to bureaucratic superiors and as a result potentially change working conditions that would affect IGF employees through his use of writing and print. Thus when the typesetters stepped out from their assigned role as mindless reproducers of texts, they claimed status as “the intellectual producers who elaborate (rather than merely transmitting) ideological messages”—as rightful members of the “lettered city” itself, fully entitled to map out its contours and determine who (and what) else deserved admission and esteem.78

The 1877 Muestras’ Message

The muestras indeed form a textual map, where an educated reader finds the names of recognizable places, important historical figures, political leaders, and cultural giants. Even with a casual glance, the names of illustrious individuals—almost exclusively men—jump off the pages. A closer examination reveals passages of texts—brief phrases that contain aphorisms, quotations, and factoids—that more closely resembled the kinds of specimens produced in the private printshops of Mariano Galván Rivera and Ignacio Cumplido. Under systematic analysis, certain contours emerge that

78 Rama, The Lettered City, 22.
help us read this map as an educated nineteenth century Mexican reader might have.

The muestras’ central themes are politics, geography, and the humanities and sciences, expressed in wide-ranging references linked with particular historical moments, people, and places. The frame of this document, however, is decidedly Mexican. Mexico, in turn, is inserted into a cosmopolitan world that would be familiar to anyone with a classical Western education. The muestras place the nation into dialogue with past and contemporary events—the French Revolution, Spain’s recently failed First Republic, France’s Third Republic, the ongoing processes of Italian unification, industrialization in England and the United States—and a non-linear history of enlightened thought.

Broadly, the muestras celebrate liberalism’s local triumph, while looking beyond Mexico’s borders towards liberalism’s status as an international ideology located within a universalist timeline. In many references to contemporary and historical personalities from both Mexico and (most commonly) Europe, the muestras collapse time and space, converging the living and the dead and imbuing—through typographic juxtapositions—the nation’s political present with a weighty importance that dates to the classical age. This narrative linkage of past with present and national with universal is accompanied by direct statements that break out of the narrative frame in order to proclaim the unique position of printers as bearers of enlightenment deserving material and intellectual recognition. Keenly aware of the political stakes of history making, particularly in the

79 To analyze this document, I quantified the 88% of its 288 references that could be assigned some kind of geographical attribute, and also experimented with categorical denominations (political figures, artists, writers, religious figures, etc.). I used this analysis to complement the qualitative description presented here.
midst of regime change, the typesetters composed a wide-ranging map of history they hoped would sway the sentiments of their superiors.

Figure 24: Page from the typesetters’ 1877 muestras.
Source: AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1264, exp. 3, no. 21/0-03.

The muestras constructed an image of the world in which Mexico loomed large as a nation; as such it formed part of the “surge in nationalist themes and topics in various
publications and imagery” produced after the French defeat as elites reconstituted and redefined national pride in volumes devoted to Mexico’s history and heroes.¹⁸⁰ That the muestras simultaneously looked inward and abroad suggests a vision parallel to that advanced by preeminent mapmaker Antonio García Cubas in his geography textbook Curso elemental de geografía universal.¹⁸¹ Published at the government printshop itself in 1869 under Sandoval’s tenure, the Curso elemental explored world geography, but similarly afforded Mexico an outsized place in an international context.¹⁸² The typesetters at the printshop, some of who might have helped produced the Curso elemental, presented Mexico in a way that was more cosmopolitan than García Cubas’ universal geography.¹⁸³

Unlike García Cuba’s dry descriptive geography, with its listings of political systems, ports, rivers, and cities, the muestras mapped its cosmopolitan world as one filled with heroes. Models of western erudition and achievement fill its pages, sharing the stage with notable Mexicans. These illustrious individuals, emerging in numerous references to writers, composers, artists, philosophers, and scientists, demonstrate the typesetter’s familiarity with leading cultural figures—both Mexican and European. The literary styles referenced are wide-ranging, from classical poets to Spanish Golden Age

¹⁸⁰ Carrera, Traveling from New Spain to Mexico, 169.
¹⁸¹ Antonio García Cubas, Curso elemental de geografía universal dispuesto con arreglo a un nuevo método que facilite su enseñanza en los establecimientos de instrucción de la República (Mexico City: Impr. del gobierno, 1869).
¹⁸² Carrera, Traveling from New Spain to Mexico, 171.
¹⁸³ While his text devoted over half its pages on descriptive geography to Mexico and divided up the remainder, the muestras devoted only one third of geographic references to Mexico. For the typesetters, the nation was such a self-evident frame that there was no need to belabor the point.
dramaturges to French Enlightenment writers to various Romantics. The Mexican public writer Lizardi, who himself tussled with printers in 1820s Mexico City makes the list, which otherwise privileges a canonical trajectory of European writers over local literary works.

The western canonical bent of the muestras’ literary texts suggest that in cultural matters, the printers looked to France, Spain, and Italy. This pattern is repeated in musical matters, with Italy emerging as the undisputed favorite. With the vogue for opera extending to the performing halls of Mexico City, perhaps typesetters had firsthand familiarity with the music of the composers—Bellini, Donizetti, Rossini, Verdi—and star performers that they referenced. One can imagine groans in the typesetting department as one man endlessly whistled a snippet from a memorable aria that he had caught at a performance in the Gran Teatro Nacional or the Teatro Principal, venues that attracted a diverse patronage eager to hear the latest European music stars.84 Perhaps he was responsible for composing two of the muestras’ scant four repeated references—Rossini and Verdi—while distracted by his own tune.

Given the muestras’ cultural contours, it is unsurprising that they advance a secular outlook, a characteristic underscored in references to the classical deities, who serve as touchstones for a secular universalism. The world of science and technology—however closely linked to notions of secular progress—forms a smaller component of the

muestras’ pantheon. While they name important figures in the history of science like Galileo, Kepler and Copernicus, there is not much focus on cutting-edge markers of progress, with the lone exception of Samuel Morse. The railway, for example, makes just one understated appearance, in spite of the recent inauguration of the Mexico City-Veracruz line in 1873. Was Mexico’s technological progress still too slow to merit scrutiny or celebration or did this elision betray typesetters’ wariness towards technological changes that might threaten their jobs? References to commercial and technological innovation—particularly directed toward the United States and England—do convey a sense of burgeoning industry beyond Mexico’s borders.

If Mexico did not stack up against the world in its scientific achievements, the muestras articulated urgent links between its recent political accomplishments and the struggles and successes of European nations. Here, the doctrine of liberalism transcends the political resentments one might expect to see directed towards France (recent occupier) and Spain (former colonizer). The muestras paid special attention to republican experiments occurring particularly in those two countries, citing Spain’s failed First Republic (1873-74), and France’s nascent Third Republic (1870-1940), in references to politicians and journalists who supported the liberal cause. As Charles Hale illuminates in his study of mid-late nineteenth century liberalism and scientific politics, liberal ideas circulated in conversation with the unfolding of political events in Europe, particularly

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85 Newspapers had long reported on labor saving typesetting machines designed in Europe and the U.S. that seemed always about to break into the market. The linotype machine that revolutionized typesetting was not commercialized until later in the century, after which it soon caught hold in Mexico.
republican experiences in Spain and France. The weekly articles of former Spanish president Emilio Castelar (referenced in the muestras), published for thirty years in Mexican newspapers, provided a forum around which Mexico’s political elites discussed liberal politics. The muestras, in references to French journalist Émile de Girardin and politicians Louis Blanc, Adolphe Thiers, Alphonse de Lamartine, among others, constructed an international community around shared experiences of liberalism. Just as Mexican politicians had debated the merits of these Europeans’ ideas in the Mexico City press before the country had descended into civil war and occupation in the 1850s, the muestras articulated a bond of solidarity with European counterparts still struggling against the conservative forces of monarchy. Mexico, after all, had secured its liberal victory.

While pride in liberalism shaped what political figures were included in the muestras, more immediate, delicate political circumstances determined who was excluded. Looming over the document yet conspicuously absent is Benito Juárez himself, the liberal president credited with his dogged resistance to French occupation. Heroes abound in the typesetters’ presentation: after all, the 1870s were a flourishing moment for Mexico’s “cult of personality,” which emerged in histories that extolled the nation’s

86 Hale, The Transformation of Liberalism, 41. Castelar published a column in El Monitor Republicano for thirty years, alongside various reprinted speeches by Spanish republican presidents including Pi y Magall and Salmerón, both of whom appear referenced in the muestras. Castelar and his cohort became models of conservative liberalism for Mexican politicians, and were influential in the adoption of “scientific politics” under the Porfrian regime.

87 Erika Pani, Para mexicanizar el Segundo Imperio: el imaginario político de los imperialistas (Mexico City: El Colegio de México / Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2001), 67.
“heroic pantheon—heroes of Independence, Indian heroes, and heroes of the Reforma.”

Indeed, the majority of the muestras’ political heroes are Mexican: political leaders and military men active in the Wars of Independence, the Wars of the Reform, and Díaz’s Tuxtepec Rebellion. There are no conservatives in this pantheon, but neither does Juárez nor his presidential successor, Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada, appear. Instead, the recently triumphant Porfirio Díaz (and his interim president Juan N. Méndez) is feted as the inheritor of liberalism, while Juárez’s absent presence permeates the document. Attuned to the political stakes of narrating history much as they appreciated the blank negative space of the page around (and hidden under) black typographic forms, the typesetters left Juárez out, throw the muestras’ allegiances into sharp relief.

Broader social context provokes some of the muestras other conspicuous absences. The paucity of women (with the exception of Roman goddesses, only four real women are represented: Dolores Guerrero, a Mexican poet; Angela Peralta, a Mexican opera singer; Adelina Patti, a Spanish opera singer; and Marie Antionette, the muestras’ lone anti-hero) reveals the typesetters’ historical pantheon to be a largely homosocial world, with near-male exclusivity forming the intellectual and emotive base of the muestras’ history. Even if women were increasingly entering the industrial workforce in

88 Carrera, Traveling from New Spain to Mexico, 171.
89 Here, we can see a consolidation of liberal narratives of Mexican history: absent are any reference to Iturbide, Santa Anna, or Cortés.
90 This supports the observations of scholars of nineteenth century masculinity who emphasize the importance of homosocial ties in the narration of both national dramas and interpersonal relationships. Irwin, Mexican Masculinities; Víctor Manuel Macías-González, "Masculine Friendships, Sentiment, and Homoerotics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: The Correspondence of José María Calderón y Tapia, 1820s-1850s," Journal of the History of Sexuality 16, no. 3 (2007): 416-435.
Mexico City (making up 32% in an 1879 census), the printing trades were predominantly (even exclusively, according to the same census) male, and the muestras, relying as they do on extolling the virtues of public men, afford little room for women in their club.91

As revealing as their gender exclusivity, the muestras contain virtually no Pre-Columbian heroes, in spite of the growing elite practice of constructing and celebrating a glorious indigenous past (they feature a single indigenous referent, Netzahualcoyotl, the Mexica poet-philosopher ruler).92 While the muestras do not glorify the history of the conquest—no conquistadors appear in their references—neither do they celebrate a mythical indigenous past in any great detail. This absence suggests ambivalence towards Mexico’s indigenous heritage that likely reflect urban liberal biases against contemporary communities seen to cling to corporate land ownership. Returning to a mythical indigenous past was simply not compatible with the muestras’ liberal vision. On the other hand, indigenous absence might connote a degree of discomfort with celebrating and claiming an identity that might be turned prejudicially against its claimants by social superiors.

The typesetters’ inclusions—masterful collections of classical references, current events, heroes, and historical narratives—amounted to a display of common knowledge, which they hoped would grant them a place within the exclusive “lettered city” being

91 Porter, Working Women in Mexico City, 13.
92 Such interest, manifest across the nineteenth century in numerous forms of representation, picked up early strands of pre-conquest mythologizing and amplified them as elites constructed alternatives to their colonial past. Carrera, Traveling from New Spain to Mexico; Rebecca Earle, The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810-1930 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
depicted. To leverage their claim, the typesetters interspersed moralizing phrases, aphorisms, and direct address statements that established a clearer tone for the muestras’ immediate purpose, which underscored and moved beyond Mata’s own directorial aims. Indeed, unlike workers who, in other historical circumstances might have used a “distinctive working class voice” to critique and transform the social order, the IGF typesetters generally reproduced the elite discourse that was used to deny full participation. Here, however, their discourse contains inconsistencies that hint at discontent with the status quo and reveals the emerging contours of liberalism with a popular bent—an alternative to crystalizing positivist ideas. On the one hand, the muestras suggest—in classic liberal parlance—that “If legislators are interested in the prosperity of the people, the absolute independence of the worker would be their second task: the instruction of the mass would be the first.” On the other, the muestras defined and defended printers’ status as informally educated individuals. “Talent is worth more than instruction,” they proclaim, echoing the moniker “hombre de talento,” an honorific commonly reserved amongst journalists for the best public writers. Here, the typesetters reworked the title for themselves by juxtaposing talent against instruction, arguing that the individual’s ability to better his own lot is more admirable than absorbing the benefits of a formal education. This phrase suggests how stock sayings used to mark superior

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94 Emilio Rabasa’s novel about Mexico City’s journalistic scene took a jab at the “hombre de talento” when he described “that privilege that men of talent have, of talking about everything, assured of doing it well, and thus not understanding the issue in question” / “por ese privilegio que tienen los hombres de talento, de hablar de todo, seguros de hacerlo bien, así no entiendan el asunto de que se trate.” Rabasa, *La gran ciencia; El cuarto poder*, 239.
status might also be claimed to contest social prejudice through creative appropriation. The muestras’ phrase, therefore, represents an attempt to recast the rules of the game, flipping the terms of liberal discourse even as it relied on the same basic principle of individual equality.

Typesetters upended standard hierarchies most brilliantly on the muestras’ penultimate page, whose posterior placement suggest that even its composers were uncomfortable with their own sharp wit. Although the muestras contain a fair amount of subtle politicking, embedded in the strategic juxtaposition of names, comments, and aphorisms, the typesetters staged their printed coup on page ten, where the name of the interim President, Juan N. Méndez appears in bold, authoritative letters (Figure 25). Directly below, Protasio P. Tagle, the Minister of the Interior and the IGF’s direct supervisor, is printed in a somewhat flowery, fanciful display face. Next, a clearly legible roman script—stylistically out of place on a page dominated largely by decorative display faces—proclaims “The printshop of the Federal Government finds itself in a lamentable state.” Next, a smaller typeface reads, “Talent is worth more than instruction,” followed by an even smaller phrase, “Liberty is a common cause.” In flowery print, the names of three Reformation figures—Luther, Calvin, and Savonarola—appear. And, in a popular nineteenth century novelty typeface, “Printing is Light.”

95 The page’s final line prints the name of Matías Romero, the Oaxacan legislator who supported Díaz after he had won elections in 1876 and served as his Minister of Finance.
With one of several direct statements that break from the narrative frame to comment directly on the state of the real IGF printshop, the typesetters reproduced the complaints leveled in Mata’s report, which decried the poor condition of printshop type. Their broader claim, which they achieve through a particularly pointed linkage between
the printshop, its overseeing superiors, and the very exercise of enlightened thought, is clear. When the typesetters choose talent over instruction, juxtapose this with a statement on liberty as a common struggle, and herald printing as the fundamental bearer of enlightenment, they cast themselves as the heroes in their own story. They almost seem to equate their efforts with that of Luther, Calvin and Savonarola—their crusade, ostensibly one of reform against intolerable conditions, in fact quests after recognition within the exclusive world they so aptly composed in the muestras, and did compose—in a material sense—on a daily basis.

**Conclusion**

The muestras offer a rare window into how typesetters communicated their worth to superiors within Mexico’s world of intellectual production after the triumph of liberalism. Unfortunately for the staff of the Government Printshop, however, these claims went unheeded during the Tuxtepec transition. Indeed, Protasio Tagle hired a temporary replacement for Filomeno Mata, who stepped down after just a month to serve as a congressional deputy for his native state of San Luis Potosí. Although Mata was supposed to resume his post, the job instead shuffled through several subsequent directors before printer Sabás A. y Munguía began his tenure, which lasted for approximately twenty years.

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96 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 1264, exp. 2, no. 67, March 6, 1877.
97 Ibid. Temporary director Julian Guinea served for approximately a month (he had previously been third assistant to the director). He was replaced by Martin Rivera, who was fired a month later and replaced by A. y Munguía. A. y Munguía served as IGF director at least until 1896, the last date for which I have located his signature. AGN, Gobernación, sin sección, caja 709, exp. 3, December, 1896, “Cuentas Comprobadas.”
Mata soon opened his own printing business, which would be chronicled in the memoir of novelist and Porfirian diplomat Federico Gamboa as the site of his first journalist job. Gamboa quit, however, when Mata broke with the Díaz government to convert *El Diario del Hogar* into the foremost opposition newspaper. Describing his new workplace and the bonds of fraternal camaraderie he developed there, Gamboa recounted coming to love the shop’s typesetters, “in spite of the fact that they are—in all parts of the world—the most vice-ridden workers in spite of their continuous brush with elevated theories, [and] humanitarian and progressive ideas.”

![Image of a page from a book](image-url)

Even as he expressed fondness for a milieu marked by late nights, low pay, and cross-class friendships, Gamboa clearly drew the dividing lines of status for his elite readership.

Typesetters at the IGF, meanwhile, chafed under their new leadership, as *El Socialista* reported that they went on strike in 1878, in protest of A. y Munguía’s proposal to lower shop wages. In an exposé letter to the editor, printer Rafael Martínez accused the director of lowering typesetter wages in retaliation against several workers—former friends whom he had begun treating “in sultanic fashion”—and of referring to workers with the insulting term “*operarios,*” instead of “*artesanos.*”

While the strike ended and scholars have assumed printers lost the battle, shop records in fact revealed that wages remained stable after the incident.

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98 Gamboa, *Impresiones y recuerdos*, 66. “al exceso de trabajo; á distinguir los errores tipográficos de una sola ojeada; á corregir una cosa y pensar en otra; á llamar al regente por su nombre y á querer á los cajistas, no obstante que son—en todas partes del mundo—los obreros más viciosos á pesar de su continuo roce con las teorías levantadas, [y] las ideas humanitarias y progresistas.”


100 Illades, *Hacia la república del trabajo*, 172. Wages compiled from available IGF records for the years 1875, 1880, 1883, 1884, 1888, 1895, 1900: All AGN, Gobernación: legajo 1322, box 2, exp. 1-5 (Jan-Dec
readers of endless texts into organized action? Although possible that printers earned a workplace victory, it is equally likely that the artisan press coverage spun a workplace dispute into a more serious confrontation as a way to tarnish the new director’s professional image and restore collective dignity. Munguía, in turn, plotted revenge in an 1880 proposal for new shop regulations that particularly targeted typesetters’ bad behavior, ordering them to “observe in all their acts the best decency and composure, avoid treating their companions with scorn or insolence, [and] avoid provoking quarrels, which will be reprimanded with the greatest severity.”

An examination of life in the government printshop reveals not only the continued interplay of status and resources but also the changing stakes that accompanied print production as it expanded and became a more bureaucratic endeavor in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The printshop no longer appeared in representations as a site of political activity and subterfuge—although violent suppression linked to politics persisted throughout the century and intensified during the late Porfiriato—but also as a place where fortunes and reputations might be made.

The expansion of government printing offered new opportunity for some. For example, the typesetter-poet Luis Rubin rose through the ranks to direct the newly established printshop of the Ministry of Public Works (Fomento) where he published his

1875); legajo 945, exp. 1-2 (Jan-Dec 1880), exp. 3 (Jan 1883); sin sección, caja 639, exp. 10-3 (June-Aug 1884); sin sección, caja 654, exp. 3-1 (Nov-Dec 1888); sin sección, caja 782, exp. 2 (Feb 1895); sin sección, caja 747, exp. 2-3 (March 1900).
101 AGN, Gobernación, legajo 945, exp. 1, “Reglamento para el régmin interior de la Imprenta del Gobierno.” Rule #5: “observar en todos sus actos la mejor decencia y compostura, evitando tratar a sus compañeros con menosprecio o insolencia, huyendo siempre de provocar riñas, que serán reprimidas con la mayor severidad.”
own writings. Filomeno Mata got his start directing the government printshop before becoming one of Porfirio Díaz’s most-chastised critics through *El Diario del Hogar*. Mata in turn employed Aurelio Garay, also a former typesetter at the government printshop, who rose to become a proofreader for *El Diario del Hogar*, author of a romantic urban novel modeled on the style of Victor Hugo and Eugène Sue, and a mentor to the young journalist Federico Gamboa. Gamboa lovingly yet humiliatingly described Garay’s own social struggles: “To prevent the editors from looking down on him,” Gamboa explained, “he chose a sort of *tapanco* or attic in the back of the printshop, closer to the roof than the floor; and to prevent his letters from disdaining him, he read and studied unceasingly.”¹⁰² Gamboa, in turn, started out in Mata’s employ before joining the ranks of the Porfirian administration and writing Mexico’s first naturalist novel, *Santa* (1903), perhaps inspired by Garay’s late-night literary advice to “Write like you speak.”¹⁰³ The dense printing networks that crisscrossed the city’s private sector and growing state institutions provided avenues for individuals able to navigate job performance, political patronage, and personal connections.

The heroic narratives, insider ties, and trade-based arguments that linked printers and their claim making also relied on exclusionary logics. Constructed largely in relation to high-minded ideas embodied in print, they implicitly—and often explicitly—distanced printers from other workers and the vast majority of Mexican society deemed less

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¹⁰² Gamboa, *Impresiones y recuerdos*, 63. “Para evitar que los redactores lo miraran mal, eligió una especie de *tapanco* ó buhardilla que estaba al fondo de la imprenta, más cerca del techo que del piso; y para evitar que las letras lo desdénaran, leía y estudiaba sin cesar.”
¹⁰³ Ibid., 65. “Escriba usted como habla.”
enlightened. Women, too, remained overwhelmingly excluded from these conversations, even though by the mid-1870s they had entered the ranks of typesetters in Mexico City, although predominantly as students in newly established vocational schools.\textsuperscript{104} While some printers imagined themselves as the vanguard in a vaguely defined project of social regeneration, many based their claims on the very modes of thinking used to exclude them from the world of “elevated theories” and “humanitarian and progressive ideas.”\textsuperscript{105} Far from a straightforward case of subaltern resistance, printer’s efforts to communicate through print nevertheless reimagined the boundaries that separated manual from intellectual labors on the printshop floor.

\textsuperscript{104} Some newspapers took notice. La Firmeza commented in 1874, for example, that women had done the typesetting for the newspaper La Comuna and for a forthcoming work on administrative law. “Por mujeres,” La Firmeza, August 26, 1874. In all likelihood, these typesetters hailed from Mexico City’s primary vocational school for women, where in 1873 they had also printed the journal Las Hijas de Anáhuac: Ensayo Literario. In 1874, the Sociedad Filarmónica Mexicana founded a typography workshop for the female pupils of its conservatory. Under the direction of Amador Ordoñez, the students produced a printing manual that extracted snippets from major works on printing. Manual de tipografía escrito expresamente para las alumnas impresoras del conservatorio de música y declamación, (Mexico City: Imprenta del conservatorio, 1875). On class, gender, and state vocational education, see Vaughan, The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880-1928; Patience A. Schell, Church and State Education in Revolutionary Mexico City (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003). On women’s participation in the printing trades in the United States, where they made up 10% of it workforce in 1890, see Rumble, The Swifts: Printers in the Age of Typesetting Races, 62-83, 110-130.

\textsuperscript{105} Gamboa, Impresiones y recuerdos, 66.


Conclusions

When the liberal printer Ignacio Cumplido died on November 30, 1887, the editorial staff of his former newspaper, *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, lamented the loss in an article inside the front page.¹ Celebrating his achievements, the article described an “indefatigable fighter that, without other weapons than intelligence, honor, a will of steel and his own unbreakable force, was able to lift himself on the wings of his enterprising, active, and fertile genius, from the obscure insignificance of that very nothing, to the most luminous heights of the social ladder.”² In the coming days, other newspapers followed suit, placing Cumplido in company with illustrious liberal heroes—including former president Benito Juárez and writer and statesman Guillermo Prieto—and casting him as a champion of the republic who had opposed the monarchical tyranny of the emperor Maximilian.³

*El Siglo Diez y Nueve* published a front page eulogy after a week of mourning had passed, in which pseudonymous writer “Cero a la izquierda” offered a different take on Cumplido’s legacy.⁴ Rather than highlighting his exceptional qualities—as the founder of

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² Ibid. “luchador infatigable que, sin otras armas que las de la inteligencia, la honradez, la voluntad de acero y el inquebrantable esfuerzo propio, supo elevarse en alas de su genio emprendedor y activo y fecundo, desde la insignificancia oscura de esa misma nada, hasta las más luminosas alturas de la escala social.”
⁴ “In Memorium,” *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, December 10, 1887. The identity of “Cero a la izquierda” remains unknown, but should probably not be confused with the more well-known “Ceros,” pseudonyms adopted and played with by Vicente Riva Palacio and Juan de Dios Peza in the earlier 1880s. After a new “Cero” appeared in 1887 writing for *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, Juan de Dios Peza disavowed this false “Cero,” leading the newcomer to change his name to “Cero a la izquierda.” Clementina Díaz y de Ovando, *Un enigma de Los Ceros: Vicente Riva Palacio o Juan de Dios Peza* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de
a major newspaper and a key champion of liberalism—Cero focused on the printer’s origins as a typesetter. Even if he had never risen to become a newspaper editor, Cero argued, Cumplido would have deserved eulogy “as a typesetter, as a humble worker of intelligence, as an artisan without other work elements than the composing stick and the typographic case in the workshop, and without other moral elements than relative instruction and the honor that was his norm.” Even when considered as a simple typesetter, he argued, Cumplido deserved praise from “those of us who dedicate our existence to spread our ideas among the social masses, by means of the written word,” since without the indispensable typesetter, “the press would be unable to realize its civilizing mission, and consequently, the writer would lack the means to make his thoughts arrive to readers.”

While the two articles used remarkably similar sentence structures, the first highlighted Cumplido’s intangible possessions—“intelligence, honor, a will of steel”—while the second focused on his material goods—“the composing stick and the typographic case”—and skills to take the measure of the man. By choosing to highlight Cumplido’s laboring roots, the second article celebrated Cumplido’s personal trajectory as a story of social ascent made possible through manual work and moral fiber. While

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5 “In Memorium, El Siglo Diez y Nueve, December 10, 1887. “Como cajista, como humilde obrero de la inteligencia, como artesano sin otros elementos de trabajo que el componedor y la caja tipográfica en el taller, y sin otros elementos morales que la instrucción relativa y la honradez que siempre fué su norma”

6 Ibid. “de cuantos consagramos la existencia a difundir nuestras ideas en las masa sociales, por medio de la palabra escrita;” “sin el cual no podría la prensa realizar su misión civilizadora, y por consiguiente, el escritor carecería del medio de hacer llegar sus pensamientos a los lectores.”
Cero did speak to an insider community composed of “those of us who dedicate our existence to spread our ideas among the social masses, by means of the written word,” his article nevertheless recognized the role of figures like Cumplido—construed here as an honorable artisan and self-made man—in making this world possible.

By the time of his death, Cumplido was no simple typesetter, as a poetic homage offered by a printer named Miguel Montiel in the worker’s publication *El Socialista* had attested just three years earlier.\(^7\) *El Socialista* had celebrated the famous printer in 1883 with a front page lithographic portrait of a serious, suited and bewhiskered Cumplido, along with Montiel’s ode, “To the Mexican Printer Don Ignacio Cumplido.”\(^8\) (Figure 26) Using typographic wordplay (which I indicate with asterisks), a passage mid-way through Montiel’s poem declaimed,

```
Cumplido! You in your history combined
Victorious thought and labor,
And your vivid memory preserves
Punching* remembrances
That today compose* the iris of your glory.
You were the intelligent worker
Who aspiring to the artist’s fame
From your poor typesetter’s sphere
Earned a laurel for your brow;
It was you who later
Became the rich proprietor
Who far from forgetting the proletariat
Protected it against cowardly pain.
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Cumplido! Tú juntastes (sic) en tu historia
Pensamiento y trabajo vencedores,
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\(^7\) Indeed, Cumplido’s origins were less humble than Cero’s obituary suggested, as he had enjoyed formal education before training a printer, and quickly became the owner of his own printshop.

\(^8\) Montiel was described in a government report as an “operario,” after being injured following the sacking of the Imprenta Poliglota in February of 1880. AGN, Secretaría de Justicia, caja 100, exp. 241.
Y guardas en tu vivida memoria
Recuerdos punzadores*
Que hoy componen* el iris de tu gloria.
Tú fuiste (sic) el obrero inteligente
Que aspirando al renombre del artista,
Desde tu pobre esfera de cajista
Lograste (sic) un laurel para tu frente;
Tú fuiste quien más tarde
Se convirtió en el rico propietario,
Que lejos (sic) de olvidar al proletario,
Lo protegió contra el dolor cobarde.”

Figure 26: Portrait, Ignacio Cumplido, 1884.
Source: Hemeroteca Nacional Digital de México

9 “Al Impresor Mexicano Don Ignacio Cumplido.” El Socialista, June 4, 1884.

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The poem, like Cero’s obituary, drew attention to Cumplido’s social ascent from modest origins but assessed his achievements from the vantage point of a humble printer. As a result, Cumplido appeared not reduced to his starting status of simple typesetter but elevated to that of artist, who “diffused light and thought, with the happy invention/ that Gutenberg bequeathed to nations.” Unlike the two articles drafted from journalists’ perspectives, Montiel’s poem highlighted both material and intellectual elements in Cumplido’s person, casting him as a truly exceptional figure because of his ability to unite “victorious thought and labor” and thus transform his own circumstances.

Like Montiel’s poem, this dissertation has explored the links between the material elements of print production and the abstract political and intellectual debates that shaped Mexico’s formation across the nineteenth century. Seen from the printshop floor, these debates reveal how liberal notions like freedom of the press ran aground amidst the messy material politics of print, as officials and elites struggled to rein in the activities of printers, newly empowered as intellectual gatekeepers and political actors. Printers’ activities—not only as the manual elaborators of printed texts, but also as self-conscious mediators who facilitated print production in spite of routine persecution and economic difficulty—made them central drivers of political debate, often to the chagrin of political elites and letrados. In the colonial era, printers acted as intermediaries who facilitated relationships between authors and government under a system defined by a necessarily collaborative relationship with viceregal and Inquisition officials. With the

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10 Ibid. “Difundió la luz y el pensamiento,/con el feliz invento/Que Gutenberg legara à las naciones….”
implementation of freedom of the press and the establishment of a republic, however, printers exercised newfound power as promoters of potentially explosive ideological agendas, even though the precarious economy meant juggling ideals with mercenary activity.

As political elites, officials, public writers, and a broader swath of urban residents debated how government and society should function and what rules and rights should accompany free expression, they did so not only with printers’ concrete activities in mind, but also in constant concert with the actors who inhabited the printshop. Thus, emerging political ideologies—particularly liberalism—cannot be separated from this specific context characterized by the shifting dynamics of collaboration, regulation, punishment, and material production. These dynamics, in turn, unfolded as interactions shaped by social hierarchies that produced demeaning expressions towards printers, evident in memoirs and exchanges among elites.  

By the end of the nineteenth century when liberals achieved political dominance in Mexico City, they channeled printers’ activities in new directions, as a more centralized state applied familiar tactics for managing information and official communication. During this time, print production expanded as the economy grew under policies pursued under the thirty-year administration of Porfirio Díaz, which prioritized industrial development through foreign investment. Díaz’s government expanded official

11 Obituaries for another long-lived liberal printer, Vicente García Torres, offered decidedly backhanded appreciations. See, for example, the appreciation from *El Partido Liberal*, reprinted as “Pésame,” *El Monitor Republicano*, January 4, 1894, 3.
printing—building on the efforts of Maximilian and the liberal governments that succeeded him—by creating additional government printshops, which presented state sponsored projects in professional journals, reports, and hefty tomes of statistics. Private firms specializing in job printing emerged to fill the needs of the growing business economy, producing letterhead, receipts, ruled ledgers, and all manner of quotidian ephemera. The newspaper became the central printed forum for political debate, even as the Díaz administration developed effective tools for managing dissent. While the regime replaced press juries comprised of citizens with judicial boards in 1882 to rein in journalists and newspaper publishers, it also continued older practices of handing out subsidies and confiscating printing presses, which officials sent to be used in the workshops of Mexico City’s correctional schools.

The continuity in official tactics towards print production becomes apparent only when we adopt the long view, crossing traditional periodizations marked by political shifts. Examining production over a century, furthermore, reveals how printers took on outsized roles in spite of only marginal technological changes. While top printshops incorporated mechanical presses into their businesses by midcentury, there is little

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13 On government efforts to manage dissent in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, see Fausta Gantús, *Caricatura y poder político: crítica, censura y represión en la ciudad de México, 1876-1888* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México; Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2009); Rafael Barajas, *El país de El Ahuizote: la caricatura mexicana de oposición durante el gobierno de Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, 1872-1876* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005); Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion*; Phyllis Lynn Smith, "Contentious Voices amid the Order: the Porfirian Press in Mexico City, 1876-1911" (PhD diss., The University of Arizona, 1996).
14 For orders to confiscate the printing presses of *El Hijo del Ahuizote, El Diario del Hogar, Vesper, and México Nuevo*, see AGN, Secretaría de Justicia, caja 559, exp. 1284, 1906; caja 559, exp. 1284, 1906; caja 604, exp. 1281, 1907; caja 754, exp. 1495, 1911.
evidence that the use of faster technologies led to increased output or dramatically restructured labor patterns. Throughout the nineteenth century, typesetter pay continued to represent the largest share of labor costs, and paper constituted perhaps the greatest business expense. It was not until the last decades of the nineteenth century that new technologies—including labor-saving linotype machines, photomechanical reproduction techniques, and motorized jobbing presses—substantially changed the look of print and the rhythms of production.

Yet while key facets of print production endured over decades, the broader paradigms structuring printshop life came under question, and printed objects attest to these changes. In the last decade of colonial rule, printed ephemera composed by printshop workers contained odes of devotion to the Virgin or sonnets dedicated to commemorating the birthdays and weddings of employers and supervisors. (Figure 27) A concrete poem in the shape of a delicate flower or a sentimental celebratory sonnet performed craft and literary ingenuity, but construed skills as communal gifts offered to higher temporal and spiritual powers. Ephemeral demonstrations like printed poetry thus worked to strengthen bonds of sociability within the printshop community and beyond, structured around clearly recognized patron-client power relations.
Figure 27: A concrete flower poem (L) and Sonnet (R) by workers in Alejandro Valdes’s printshop, No Date (ca.1818)
Source: Sutro Library, vol. PM 292; Misc. Mexican Broadsides SMBC7

While these relationships and the language of patronage by no mean dissolved after independence, ephemeral creations like the 1877 type specimen produced by workers in the National Printshop or the ode to Cumplido written by a humble printer in 1884 not only emphasized individual success but also increasingly materialized aspirations for social advancement, and perhaps even for a different social order. Not content to reproduce social hierarchies in printed form, printers imagined a world where they might also be recognized for their intellectual contributions. Their efforts to communicate through print—enacting what Jacques Rancière describes as the worker’s “dream of moving to the other side of the canvas”—challenged the dominant narratives
that excluded printers, because of the stain of ink under their fingernails, from the “lettered city” they themselves had constructed.$^{15}$

Appendix A: Typesetter Pay Rates, 1875-1900

In the National Government Printshop, typesetters’ wages were calculated according to different payscales. While those who set type for the government gazette received pay pegged to batches of 100 lines, piecework for producing other kinds of official documents—including decrees, circulars, and pamphlets—was calculated by the page according to set prices. The typesetter pay rate at the Government Printshop remained constant between 1875 and 1900, and seems to have been the same in the major shops throughout Mexico City.

Wages compiled from available IGF records for the years 1875, 1880, 1883, 1884, 1888, 1895, 1900: All AGN, Gobernación: legajo 1322 box 2, exp. 1-5 (Jan-Dec 1875); legajo 945, exp. 1-2 (Jan-Dec 1880), exp. 3 (Jan 1883); sin sección, caja 639, exp. 10-3 (June-Aug 1884); sin sección, caja 654, exp. 3-1 (Nov-Dec 1888); sin sección, caja 782, exp. 2 (Feb 1895); sin sección, caja 747, exp. 2-3 (March 1900).

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<th>Type Size (U.S.)</th>
<th>Approx. Point Size (Contemp.)</th>
<th>Gazette rate: cents per 100 lines</th>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>Entredos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lectura</td>
<td>Pica</td>
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Biography

Corinna Zeltsman was born in the Bronx, New York in 1983. She attended Ossining High School and received her BA in Latin American Studies with high honors at Wesleyan University in 2006. She also studied letterpress printing, printmaking and bookbinding thanks to scholarships and fellowships at the Center for Book Arts, the Manhattan Graphics Center, and the Wells College Summer Book Arts Institute. She entered the graduate program in history at Duke University in 2010. Zeltsman’s writing and research has been supported by a Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship, a Mellon International Dissertation Research Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council, the American Printing History Association, the Duke Graduate School, the Duke History Department, and the Duke Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. She is also a Mellon Fellow in Critical Bibliography at Rare Book School (2015-17).