

PEDAGOGICAL PROGRAMS FOR A PERIOD OF CRISIS: *EL MUSEO MEXICANO* (1843-1845)

PROGRAMAS PEDAGÓGICOS PARA UN PERÍODO DE CRISIS:
EL MUSEO MEXICANO (1843-1845)

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the literary periodical publication *El Museo mexicano* (1843-1845) in order to reveal its pedagogical program. As it shows, the magazine challenges the often-assumed clear-cut separation between liberal and conservative ideologies regarding education. In order to reveal this, the focus of this study falls on two things: first, on the specific educational goals declared by the editors in the prologues to the five volumes of the magazine; and second, on the implicit ones found in its contents, paying particular attention to the articles on chemistry. This will uncover the tension created between the editor's adherence to Liberal ideals of schooling, and the conservative sensibilities that inform their choice of materials for the magazine.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo explora la publicación literaria periódica *El Museo mexicano* (1843-1845) para revelar su programa pedagógico. Como se muestra, la revista reta la idea de una clara separación entre ideologías liberales y conservadoras sobre la educación. Para revelar esto, este estudio se enfoca en dos elementos: primero, en las metas educacionales específicas que los editores declaran en los prólogos a los cinco volúmenes de la revista; segundo, en las metas implícitas que se encuentran en sus contenidos, prestando especial atención a los artículos sobre química. Esto revelará la tensión que se crea entre la adherencia de los editores a los ideales liberales sobre educación, y las sensibilidades conservadoras que informan su elección de materiales para la revista.

PALABRAS CLAVE

conservative sensibilities, 19th Century Mexico, *El Museo mexicano*

KEYWORDS

sensibilidades conservadoras, México siglo XIX, *El Museo mexicano*

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During what David Brading has called the tragic decade of the 1840s¹, Mexico was experiencing one of the most critical stages in the formation of its State, which was disorganized and inefficient, if and when functioning. Twenty changes of heads of state succeeded one another between July 1839 and June 1848, most often coming to power through popular or military uprisings against their forerunners. The strenuous political instability was symptomatic of a destroyed economy, a rapidly changing society, and the disputes that took place between different political factions in deciding what form of government the country ought to have. Furthermore, conflicts were also international, and, as known, the young nation had to fight against the United States (1846-1848), losing more than half of its original territory in the war. These tensions resulted not only in uprisings, *pronunciamientos*, but also in countless debates in the press, cafés, and social gatherings that questioned the policies and the legitimacy of the government in place, and loudly expressed readiness to overthrow it.

However, the period was not exclusively characterized by disagreements. In

nineteenth-century Mexico, there was a broad consensus about the importance of education as a means of social improvement. For liberals, conservatives, and supporters of all ideologies in between², schools were to be the cradle of a new and educated citizenry, although their pedagogical proposals varied. In very general terms, supporters of liberalism were most influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment, arguing that the ability to acquire knowledge came through reason, which was an inherently human capacity. For them³, education had to be universal, the responsibility of the State, free, and secular. They also argued for the capacity of each individual citizen to advance through the acquisition of knowledge. On the other hand, the more conservative principles of education were inspired by the idea that God had created humans with innate spirituality and that through an education based on morals, they could better understand His creations. Therefore, those opposed to Liberal educational reforms supported the traditional schools of colonial times, where the Catholic church had a strong role and theological principles stood at the center of the syllabus, also approving of private and

1 David Brading, *The first America. The Spanish monarchy, creole patriots, and the liberal state, 1492-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 642.

2 William Fowler and Humberto Morales Moreno have shown that although the term *conservador* started to be common in Mexico in the 1830s and it was not politically used until the 1840s. They also remind us that the Conservative Party was not founded until 1849. Therefore, for the period I am researching, they prefer to talk, as they did at the time, of “conservative sentiments”. William Fowler and Humberto Morales Moreno, “Introducción: una (re)definición del conservadurismo mexicano del siglo diecinueve,” in *El conservadurismo mexicano en el siglo XIX*, ed. William Fowler and Humberto Morales Moreno (Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1999), 12-20. An example of these blurred ideological sentiments could be the Senator for Jalisco, Antonio Pacheco Leal, whom one could say had “conservative sentiments or sensibilities.” During the 1820s, he had positioned himself against the expulsion of the Spaniards and opposed Valentín Gómez Farías’ Liberal Reform of 1833 with its proposed expropriation of clerical lands. However, he, at the same time was supportive of Farías’ Educational Reform, which introduced important laic pedagogical principles in Mexico. Rafael Rojas, *Los derechos del alma: ensayos sobre la querrela liberal-conservadora en Hispanoamérica (1830-1870)*, Kindle (Editorial Taurus Historia, 2014), pt. loc. 1144.

3 Ernesto Meneses Morales, *Tendencias educativas oficiales en México, 1821-1911*, 2a ed. (México, D.F.: Centro de Estudios Educativos - Universidad Iberoamericana, 1998), 9.
<https://archive.org/details/MenesesMoralesErnesto.TendenciasEducativasOficialesEnMexico182119112002/page/n21/mode/2up/search/opciones+del+mexico+independiente>. (retrieved on March 6, 2020)

religious schools. However, the letrados' ideological relation to education was not straightforward, as they often adhered, at the same time, to opposing views about the role of instruction in society. This ideological fluctuation broadly defined the first half of the Nineteenth Century, for as William G. Acree and Juan Carlos González Espitia remind us:

“Liberalism and the dream of republican systems provided some guidelines, but they were not enough to make for a trouble-free merger of ideals with reality. In fact, this process fragmented into civil wars between liberals and conservatives (and federalists versus centrists); debates on race and the integration of ethnic groups into national communities; a fierce competition for predominance over national imaginaries; and, among other splinters, complex and often tense relationships of popular classes with people in position of power”⁴.

In fact, within these political tensions, new plans for a national school system were as challenging to put into

practice as keeping a stable government. Entering the 1840s, education in Mexico was not systematic and mainly maintained by the Lancasterian⁵ schools and some religious orders. Even though there were political efforts to create a general plan of education, like the one in the *Bases Orgánicas de 1843*, political unpredictability, the war with the United States and the lack of public funding hindered both legal and administrative plans⁶. Furthermore, as Anne Staples has noted, these factors were further aggravated by the shortage of teachers, the long distances between settlements, and the limited social demand for schools⁷.

Thus, it has been argued that among a widespread anxiety of political and social dissolution⁸, Mexico's printing entrepreneurs turned to the production of illustrated magazines not only to promote their publications to a hungry market but also to make sense of the surrounding chaos. During this period of deep crisis, the appearance of a consolidated cultural

4 William G. Acree Jr. and Juan Carlos González Espitia, “Introduction,” in *Building nineteenth-century Latin America: re-rooted cultures, identities, and nations* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2010), 8.

5 The Lancasterian model of school was widely implemented during the 19th Century. As María Ester Aguirre Lora has noted, these schools decisively impacted the country's elementary education from 1822 to 1890. They started as private associations offering free basic instruction; but in 1842, under the rule of Santa Anna, the government delegate to them the Directorate of Primary Instruction, which gave the Lancasterian system access to an extensive network of schools and teachers throughout the country, and a significant influence in the educational sector. María Ester Aguirre Lora, “Una invención del siglo XIX. La escuela primaria (1780-1890),” in *Diccionario de Historia de la Educación en México* (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 2002), 5: http://biblioweb.tic.unam.mx/diccionario/html/articulos/sec_16.htm. There were many reasons why the Lancasterian system became so popular, among others, because it provided “an affordable and effective means to educate many students with limited numbers of teachers. A single teacher oversaw several “monitors” or student teachers per classroom, who, in turn, conveyed the instructor's orders to less advanced classmates. The method was highly regimented in space and time; discipline consisted of impressing students' feelings of accomplishment through rewards that filled them with pride or shaming penalties that excluded corporal punishment”. Antonio G. Espinoza, “National education systems: Latin America,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Education*, ed. Rury, John L. and Tamura, Eileen H. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199340033.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199340033-e-11>. (retrieved on May 1, 2020)

6 Raúl Bolaños Martínez, “Orígenes de la educación pública en México,” en *Historia de la educación pública en México (1876-1976)*, ed. Fernando Solana, Raúl Gardiel, and Raúl Bolaños Martínez, 2nd ed. (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001), 16-22.

7 “Panorama Educativo al comienzo de la vida independiente,” in *Ensayos sobre la historia de la educación en México*, ed. Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, Dorothy Tanck de Estrada, and Anne Staples (México, D.F.: Colegio de México, 1981), 123.

8 David Brading, *The first America. The Spanish monarchy, creole patriots, and the liberal state, 1492-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 642; Michael P. Coteloe, *The Central Republic in Mexico, 1836-1846. 'Hombres de Bien' in the age of Sant Anna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 22.

realm was sustained by illustrated publications, as they aimed to provide “an official canon of learning and discernment at a time when the traditional provision of education and the established promoters of culture had been suspended”⁹. As Morelos Torres Aguilar has shown, numerous educational journals and magazines offered specific pedagogical proposals for children, workers of particular trades, women, and the general public. In their pages, they contained pedagogical theories, socio-political contents, religious education, critiques of the school system, exercises and activities, general culture, technical materials, and more¹⁰. Seen together, these “informal educators”¹¹ bear witness to how instruction and learning were perceived by teachers, journalists, and politicians, displaying the prominence of their discussions in the public debate. More importantly, they cemented a liberal discourse about education that would dominate the century, a discourse that argued in favor of the illustration of the popular classes¹² and promised a better future by rapid social change. These magazines created a rhetorical call strongly policing education’s social value in liberal terms. However, in practice, as I will show in the example below, their pedagogical projects oscillated between liberal and conservative approaches to instruction. Thus, even if their prosaic egalitarian

mission lost something of its force when uttered by lettered elites eager to protect their status, they provide nonetheless an important vantage point for understanding how conservative sensibilities arose from liberalism.

Furthermore, these magazines, which assumed the role of distributors of knowledge for adults, were, as Erica Segre has argued, a cooperative undertaking by the hand of writers, printers, and editors:

“Before the emergence of a professional identity for literati, these *portmanteau* periodicals were genuinely collective enterprises, where anonymity — albeit often strategic or feigned — rather than authorship was the norm. They were not commercially driven and regularly foundered because of a lack of official patronage, skeletal subscriptions, and poor circulation. The studied congeniality and moderate pluralism which they espoused attempted to nurture a readership whose character and very existence remained nebulous”¹³.

In what follows, I will analyze an example of a commercially driven magazine of this nature while I ask: Did the editors define a concrete pedagogical program for their readers? And if so, what were the ideological premises behind said program?

In his articulation of a General Theory of Magazines, Tim Holms suggests five essential characteristics that define

9 Erika Segre, *Intersected identities. Strategies of visualization in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Mexican culture* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 6.

10 Morelos Torres Aguilar, “Publicaciones sobre educación en México en el Siglo XIX,” *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 15/20 (Tunja - Boyacá 2013): 269-70.

11 Celia del Palacio Montiel, “‘Impugnar los errores de los últimos siglos’. La función educativa de la prensa mexicana decimonónica,” *Comunicación y Sociedad* 34 (Zapopan - Jalisco 1998): 88.

12 For the purpose of this article, “popular classes” are understood simply as a multiracial, multiage, and multigender group that excludes the social elites and upper-middle class. It included indigenous people, children, women, peasants, vagrants, old people, unemployed people, a working class of scarce means, and so on.

13 Erika Segre, *Intersected identities. Strategies of visualization in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Mexican culture* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 6-7.

the modern magazine genre¹⁴. What is noteworthy about his proposal is that it shifts the attention from the writers, editors, and contents of the magazines to the powerful bond these publications establish with their readers, building reader-identities and communities of readers¹⁵. In his theoretical proposition, the readership is all but “nebulous”, being defined through an active relation with the publisher and the publication, and not merely by numbers and statistics or national affiliation. In mid-nineteenth-century Mexico, the group of people who could read was small and mostly limited to a sector of urban middle and upper classes; however, they were quite energetic and would set the foundations of a vibrant culture of reading periodical publications

that lasted throughout the century. Still, I ask, how did these publications respond to the perceived needs of their readers?

To start addressing these questions, I look at *El museo mexicano, ó, Miscelanea pintoresca de amenidades curiosas é instructivas*, a weekly literary magazine printed in Mexico City by Ignacio Cumplido¹⁶ between 1843 and 1845. Scholars have studied this magazine predominantly focusing thematically on its contents; for example, its articles on geography and travel writing¹⁷, its historiographical essays¹⁸, its sketches of manners, *artículos de costumbres*¹⁹, or the images that accompanied the texts²⁰. However, little or no attention has been paid to the *rhetorical articulation* of the magazine’s objectives

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- 14 These are: “1, magazines always target a precisely defined group of readers; 2, magazines base their content on the expressed and perceived needs, desires, hopes and fears of a defined group; 3, magazines develop a bond of trust with their readerships; 4, magazines foster community-like interactions between themselves and their readers, and among readers; and 5, magazines can respond quickly and flexibly to changes in the readership and changes on the broader society”. Tim Holmes, “Magazines: a historical survey”, in *Magazine journalism. Journalism studies: key texts*, Tim Holmes and Liz Nice (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012), 7.
- 15 Holmes does not include newspapers in his theoretical proposal, as even though they might fulfill more than one of these requirements, they do not fulfill all of them simultaneously. “Because of the newspaper’s history/legacy as a vehicle of the Fourth Estate, it has been unusual (until relatively recently) for it to base its content on a consideration of the readers’ actual needs or wishes, as opposed to a paternalistic provision of what the editor or proprietor determined that the readers ought to want”. Holmes, “Magazines: a historical...”, 8. For him, therefore, newspapers, including those of the nineteenth century, would seldom create these kinds of interactions between readers.
- 16 Ignacio Cumplido was one of the most successful printer-editors of the mid-nineteenth century Mexico. He owned and published the famous newspaper *El siglo XIX* and was renowned for the excellent quality of his prints. For a detailed study of his enterprise, see María Esther Pérez Salas, “Ignacio Cumplido: Un empresario a cabalidad,” in *Constructores de un cambio cultural: impresores-res-editores y librerías en la Ciudad de México, 1830-1855*, ed. Laura Suárez de la Torre. (México, D.F.: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2003), 145-56; Arturo Aguilar Ochoa, “El Mundo del impresor Ignacio Cumplido,” in *Historia de la vida cotidiana en México. Bienes y vivencias. El siglo XIX*, ed. Anne Staples (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México - Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2002), 499-526; Marina Garone Gravier, “Competencia tipográfica en México a mediados del siglo XIX: entre la disputa tecnológica e ideológica del catalán Rafael de Rafael y el jalisciense Ignacio Cumplido,” *Bulleti de La Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona* LII (Barcelona 2010): 299-324.
- 17 Rodrigo Antonio Vega y Ortega Báez, “La colección territorial sobre la República Mexicana de *El Museo mexicano* (1843-1846)”, *Revista de El Colegio de San Luis* 8 (San Luis Potosí 2014): 96-127; Adam T. Sellen, “Giving Shape to the Past: Pre-Columbia in Nineteenth-Century Mexican Literary Journals”, *Boletim Do Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi. Ciências Humanas* 12/2 (Belem 2017): 359-75; Edgar Mejía, “Nación, coleccionismo y tecnologías visuales en el viaje a Veracruz de Manuel Payno”, *Literatura Mexicana* XXIII/2 (Ciudad de México 2012): 5-29; Ana Lilia Sabás, “La presencia de la geografía y la historia natural en *El Museo mexicano*”, in *Geografía e historia natural hacia una historia comparada: estudio a través de Argentina, México, Costa Rica y Paraguay*, ed. Celina Lértora Mendoza, (Buenos Aires: Ediciones FEPAL, 2007), 127-36.
- 18 Amada Carolina Pérez, “El pasado como objeto de colección y la historia como ciencia moral. Una aproximación historiográfica a la revista *El Museo mexicano*”, *Tzintzun. Revista de Estudios Históricos* 41 (Morelia 2005): 35-56.
- 19 Jefferson Rea Spell, “The Costumbrista Movement in Mexico”, *PMLA* 50/1 (New York 1935): 290-315; María Esther Pérez Salas, *Costumbrismo y litografía en México: un nuevo modo de ver* (México, D.F.: UNAM - Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 2005).
- 20 María Esther Pérez Salas, “Los secretos de una empresa exitosa: la imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido,” in *Constructores de un cambio cultural: impresores-editores y librerías en la Ciudad de México 1830-1855*, ed. Laura Suárez de la Torre. (México, D.F.: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2003), 101-82; Pérez Salas, “Ignacio Cumplido: un empresario a cabalidad...”, 145-56; Marina Garone Gravier, “Nineteenth-century Mexican graphic design: the case of Ignacio Cumplido,” *Design Issues* 18/4 (Cambridge 2002): 54-63.

made by the editors, their pedagogical statement of purpose as it were, and what the magazine actually *did* as an instructional tool. In this context, I want to argue that *El museo mexicano* presents a *pedagogical program for a period of crisis*, which attenuates, if not challenges, the differences as mentioned above between the instructional proposals of the period and distances itself from institutionalized education. In other words, with its pedagogical proposal this magazine exposes the fluid connections that existed between liberal and conservative approaches to instruction, challenging the notion that Mexican society in the 1840s was divided by two clearly defined and irreconcilable ideologies about education. Therefore, this article seeks to bring to the surface said pedagogical program and explore the nature of the reader-students they tried to reach. In order to do this, the focus will fall on two things: first, on the specific educational goals declared by the editors in the prologues to the five volumes of the magazine; and second, on the implicit ones found in the contents of the magazine, paying particular attention to the articles on chemistry. This will uncover the tension created between the editor's alleged adherence to Liberal ideals of schooling, and the *conservative sensibilities*²¹ that inform the choice of materials presented in the magazine.

A number of illustrated periodical publications conceived as devices for the exhibition of knowledge flourished in the 1840s in Mexico, often taking the

names of “magazine”, “bazar”, “museum”, or “mosaic”. These names conferred the notion that the publication was to serve as a conceptual display hall of information, ideas, and images. Further, these titles may also be read as a reference to the in practice non-existent National Museum of Mexico, which in 1825 had already been created by the first president of the country, Guadalupe Victoria. However, for a long time, the museum had more of a legal life than a material one. This was not only due to political instability and lack of resources; it also became difficult to find in Mexico City suitable premises for the collections, which were not cataloged properly. One had to wait until 1865 for the consolidation of the National Museum, when Emperor Maximilian allowed the museum to move into the Mint House²²

In this context, and seen as a whole, the magazine *El museo mexicano*, throughout its 2.880 pages, stands out as a fruitful example of the effort to gather scientific and cultural information (about national and international topics alike), classify it, put it in order, exhibit it, and ultimately to interpret and understand it. Its subjects were varied and included articles on history, geography, biographies of famous men and women, social types and costumes, science, nature, and some literature and short informal essays. All contents were selected, as stated in the introduction to the first volume, because they represented “the most important truths of science, the most useful methods of the arts, the most interesting thoughts

21 The concept conservative sensibilities focuses on how conservative values were expressed in the magazine, instead of on declared or alleged political affiliations of the editors of the magazine.

22 Frida Estefani González Zamora, “El Museo Nacional Mexicano y La Fundación de La Revista Anales Del Museo Nacional Mexicano (1877-1908)”, *Quirón. Revista de Estudiantes de Historia* 4/8 (Medellín 2018): 72.

about history, the most beautiful literary productions”²³. The high number and quality of lithographs that accompanied the magazine, including some maps, and the collaboration of the leading writers of the time, made this publication a significant cultural event during its short life. There was a total of 5 volumes of the magazine, which had two periods or *épocas*. During its time of production, and more or less regularly, readers would get a fascicle of 24 pages printed in two columns each Thursday, which would later be bound together in volumes²⁴. *El museo mexicano* was a publishing success, running 1500 copies of each issue, which were distributed all over Mexico and even reached Cuba. Adam T. Sellen reminds us that although these numbers may not seem very high, “the likelihood that each exemplar had several readers should be borne in mind”²⁵. With its many pages read all over the nation, the magazine engaged in a bold epistemological, ideological, cultural, and social project. What is more, this kind of publication empowered the reader, who, through it, could engage in a critical discussion and “had access to a representation of the world and the nation in microcosm”²⁶.

El museo mexicano followed a tradition of collaboration between different ideologies established by the famous Academy of Letrán, an association founded in 1836 by a group of students from the Letrán School, among them Guillermo Prieto, Manuel Payno, and José María Lacunza, who in time would become its director²⁷. The goal of the Academy was to promote and uplift the cultural life of Mexico, endorsing its incorporation in the new and modern social order; to do so, they welcomed the works of writers and artists of all ideologies. As Prieto recalls when writing about the creation of the Academy: “We, the founders, had pronounced ourselves against creating any regulations; it was decided as a fundamental law, not written, that whoever aspired to become a member should read out loud a literary piece in prose or verse and that once the candidacy was approved, it should suffice for membership”²⁸. The result, at least until it broke apart precisely due to internal ideological conflicts, was a fruitful relationship across ideological factions that would be followed by many cultural actors, among them *El museo mexicano*. Like the Academy, the printing initiative of *Cumplido* was also a collaboration between followers of different ideologies.

23 “[L]as verdades mas importantes de las ciencias, los métodos mas útiles de las artes, las consideraciones mas interesantes de la historia, las producciones mas hermosas de la literatura”. Guillermo Prieto, and Manuel Payno, eds., *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea pintoresca de amenidades curiosas e instructivas*, vol. I, 1a época. (Mexico City: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1843), 3. *All translations are by me unless otherwise noted.*

24 Miguel Ángel Castro and Guadalupe Curiel, eds., “*El Museo mexicano*”, in *Publicaciones periódicas mexicanas del Siglo XIX: 1822-1855. Fondo Antiguo de la Hemeroteca Nacional y Fondo Reservado de la Biblioteca Nacional de México* (México, D.F.: UNAM, 2000). <http://www.hndm.unam.mx/consulta/publicacion/visualizarDescripcion/558ff9387d1e3252308614bf?unaLetra=M&tipoBusqueda=4&numDocs=20&palabrasBuscar=&ide=558ff9387d1e3252308614bf>. (retrieved on February 12, 2020)

25 Sellen, “Giving shape to the past: Pre-Columbia in...”, 362.

26 Erika Segre, *Intersected identities. Strategies of visualization in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Mexican culture*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 7.

27 Pérez, “El pasado como objeto de colección y...”, 37.

28 “Los fundadores nos habíamos pronunciado contra todo reglamento; se dictó como ley fundamental, no escrita, que el que aspirase a socio presentara una composición en prosa o verso y que hecha la aprobación de la candidatura fuera lo bastante para la admisión”. Guillermo Prieto, *Memorias de mis tiempos*, ed. Horacio Labastida, 2nd ed. (México, D.F.: Porrúa, 1996), 75.

Prieto and Payno, renowned liberals, directed the first period of the magazine from 1843 to 1844; and Lacunza, a quite moderate liberal, the second one in 1845. Cumplido, an active and outspoken liberal, had hired printer Rafael de Rafael in 1843²⁹, a Catalan of strong conservative tendencies who had come to Mexico from New York at Cumplido's invitation. This heterogeneous group managed to create one of the most technologically and typographically innovative presses in Mexico City, although the collaboration between Cumplido and Rafael was tense from the beginning, due to both ideological and business-related differences³⁰.

During its short lifetime, and from the very beginning, the aim of *El museo mexicano* was defined as didactic, in the sense of the word as it was used at that time in Spanish (*didascálico*): "that which is proper and adequate for teaching"³¹. The introduction to the first volume, signed by the editors, Prieto and Payno, presented the advantages that a publication of this nature had for the "civilized nations"; arguing that, as the need for instruction in Mexico was so dire, they wished to reach with their magazine even the "last social classes" and "the most undeveloped settlements"³². The wording in this short text (less than two pages) leaves no doubt about their presumed pedagogical agenda, as it builds upon

carefully selected words and phrases that are repeated and that are just variants of, or point to, the concept of *didascálico*; that is, the materials to be selected for publication in the magazine: science, the arts, history, literature, discoveries, data, natural history, monuments, mineralogy, botany, zoology, antiquities, biographies, plants, animals, and so on. Although the introduction, as stated above, should be read as a rhetorical appeal directed to a limited community of readers, such an emphasis on the academic contents to be published attests to a steadfast viewpoint that equated education with the acquisition of information; that is, with encyclopedic knowledge.

However, in this introduction there is also an overwhelming presence of adjectives and expressions that link *El museo mexicano* with pleasure: the style, it is promised, is to be agreeable, the productions beautiful, the publication light and pleasant, the subjects interesting and important, the data precious, the antiquities mysterious, history rich and surprising, the portentous and brilliant Mexican nature will awaken emotions in the thousands, illustrations will be enjoyable, literature beautiful, and even the typography will be lovely and simple³³. With these words, the promise of a gratifying future for the reader conquers the page. Also, knowledge turns into more

29 From 1845, Rafael y Rafael was to become the editor of the conservative newspaper *El Católico*. Three years later, he started another conservative newspaper, *El Universal*, of which he was to be chief editor until 1851. This period coincides with the consolidation of the Conservative Party in Mexico, which undoubtedly helped his enterprise. Marina Garone Gravier, "Competencia tipográfica en México a mediados del Siglo XIX: entre la disputa tecnológica e ideológica del catalán Rafael de Rafael y el jalisciense Ignacio Cumplido", *Butlletí de la Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona* LII (Barcelona 2010): 308.

30 Garone, "Competencia tipográfica en México a mediados...", 312.

31 "Lo que es propio y á propósito para la enseñanza". Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana por la Real Academia Española*, 9a (Madrid: Imprenta de D. Francisco María Fernández, 1843).

32 Guillermo Prieto and Manuel Payno, eds., *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea pintoresca de amenidades curiosas e instructivas*, vol. II, 1a época. (Mexico City: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1843), 3.

33 Prieto and Payno, *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea pintoresca de amenidades...*, 3-4.

than the acquisition of information, showing an undeniable conviction in people's power to master their personal wellbeing through knowledge. Information is converted into a happiness-seeking instrument; an antidote, if you wish, to the aforesaid general state of anxiety of social dissolution. Moreover, the insistence on the achievement of pleasure distances the magazine's project from a rationalist—and in theory liberal—approach to education, where knowledge is to be acquired by the process of reasoning, imbedded with optimism but detached from passions³⁴, as means to a social end: civilization. Hence, what the pages of the introduction reveal is a social, intellectual, and *emotional* mission closely linked to the creation of a particular community. Mónica Bolufer's arguments about the idiosyncratic nature of Spanish Romantic culture of sensibility could also be applied, in this specific case, to the context of 1840s Mexico:

“Although sentiments are naturalized as impulses that need to be given an outlet, it is understood and often explicitly declared that they should be educated and channeled. On the other hand, sentiments are not yet seen as closely linked to personal identity in the sense of an autonomous self [...]. On the contrary, sentiments are interpreted as the bonding agent that creates society, binding individual to others [...]. While private life is seen as the most suitable (but not the only) sphere for the expression of the emotions, this private dimension where feelings can blossom is still not exclusively identified with domestic and family space. Rather, it is connected with a broader

notion of sociability (a crucial concept in Enlightenment thought and culture) that includes and particularly favors elective relationships: salons (*tertulias*), academies, and other voluntary or informal circles, friendship bonds, and small networks”³⁵.

These elective relationships, I would like to add, were reinforced by literary magazines like *El museo mexicano*. Suggestively, its first volume ends with a full list of subscribers; a list that creates not only an imagined community of readers sharing the same pleasurable moments, but also a concrete community, one that is drawn and identified in ink, one that links names, last names, and places of residence of recognizable people. The result is a tension between the introduction's alleged intent to create an instructional tool accessible for all, a sort of liberal hymn to equality in education, and the list of privileged people who already had knowledge in their hands with every number of the publication. A list to be observed from afar if one did not have the money to buy the magazine. The collection of names appears encapsulated in a privileged social status vis à vis the absent popular classes, denoting a cataloguing desire that exposes an ideological inconsistency in the well-known liberal affiliations of both Prieto and Payno. Moreover, the columns of names listed one after another sets in motion in the readers a sense of ownership of knowledge and belonging to a closed elite of learners that resisted change.

34 As it is known, John Locke's ideas on education were most influential for the Liberal script of progress. For him, the human mind was a tabula rasa that learning came only from experience and reflection.

35 Mónica Bolufer, “Reasonable sentiments. Sensibility and balance in eighteenth-century Spain”, in *Engaging the emotions in Spanish culture and history*, ed. Luisa Elena Delgado, Pura Fernández, and Jo Labanyi (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016), 707-728.

It is therefore significant that the introduction to the second volume starts with a reference to said list of subscribers, both “outsiders and from [the] capital”³⁶, and engages immediately in the portrayal of the hard work the editors have to do in order to meet the needs of their readers –and give them the pleasurable experience promised in the introduction to the first volume. Prieto and Payno commit in this text to work with even more “enthusiasm and constancy”³⁷ than before in order to achieve the goals of the publication, while the young illustrators will overcome their possible lack of experience “with lively enthusiasm and a constant application” and will produce graphics equivalent to the ones printed in France and England³⁸.

Yet again, the vocabulary catches the attention, as the words used to describe the work of the publishers seem to have been written to echo Franco Moretti’s characterization of the bourgeois values of work³⁹: effort, diligence, burning desire for improvement, love of progress, endeavor, enthusiasm, constancy, difficult tasks, work and application, these phrases accumulate in the pages, so that the image of a morally correct and hard-working publisher is drawn unmovable from that introduction. An industrious man, a self-disciplined creator of industry and growth, he could well be the one whose

job will put into order the chaotic society in Mexico of the 1840s.

Thus, the magazine’s hard work and the act of reading are rhetorically linked through emotions that acquire a positive connotation: ethics of work and pleasure. The pedagogical project of *El museo mexicano* reveals itself aimed at a specific community, one created by editorial and reading practices. A closed community both imagined, through a shared access to knowledge, as well as tangible, through the enumeration of persons that own the copies of the magazine. An educational publication that will put Mexico en route to modernization by creating a product of the same quality as the ones produced in the two most admired capitals of Europe.

Until now, as seen in the introductions to *El museo mexicano*, the editors defined its contents, its goals, and their own work ethic, managing to create a sense of unity grounded in the sentiments associated with reading. But then something happens. The third volume opens with words of gratitude towards those who have contributed to the consolidation of the magazine, the writers of the “brilliant articles” that have appeared in their pages and the readers:

36 Prieto and Payno, *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea...*, i.

37 “vamos á comenzar el segundo tomo con mas empeño, con mas entusiasmo y constancia”, Prieto and Payno, *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea...*, ii.

38 “y si profesores noveles de su difícil arte carecen todavía de una larga experiencia, aguardan confiadamente suplir esta falta con un vivo entusiasmo y una aplicación constante; y no dudan desde ahora afirmar, que dentro de pocas semanas presentarán grabados que nada desmerezcan al lado de los bellísimo que producen las mejores prensas de Francia y de Inglaterra”. Prieto and Payno, *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea...*, ii.

39 Franco Moretti, *The bourgeois. Between history and literature* (London: Verso, 2014), 3-4. These words are in the introduction to the second volume of *El museo mexicano*: “esfuerzo”, “diligencia”, “ardiente deseo por la mejora”, “amor por los progresos”, “empeño”, “entusiasmo”, “constancia”, “penosas tareas”, “trabajo”, “diligencia”, and “aplicacion”.

“For their part, the editors have not overlooked, nor will they overlook, any means that leads to the satisfaction of the debt of gratitude they have contracted. Their first purpose is to constantly adopt all the improvements recommended to them; for the continuation of the third volume, they have the pleasure of announcing some changes, which they think will not be scorned by the public”⁴⁰.

The relation between editors and readers is presented here as interactive, with the needs of the consumer, the reader, placed at the heart of the magazine’s creation. In other words, *El museo mexicano* is described as a modern magazine as defined by Holmes terms: a publication where publishers adapt the contents quickly to “the expressed and perceived needs desires, hopes and fears” of their readership, developing a bond with them, and fostering “community-like interactions”⁴¹. Consequently, the articles and illustrations are not selected any longer because they represent the most important, useful, interesting, and beautiful educational subjects, as planned in the first volume⁴². Now, the teacher-editor, at least rhetorically, accommodates the *disdascálica* to satisfy a “debt of gratitude” acquired by the response and comments of the “enlightened readers” that buy the magazine⁴³. The economic dynamics of the collaboration among this closed community is stressed: the publishers owe the readers for their feedback on the publication and pay their debt by tough labor. Several references to their generosity

openly define the readers as economic supporters of *El museo mexicano*, and not only as learners eager to experience the pleasures of learning. Through this collaboration, the magazine acquires a measurable economic value, and the interactive exchange of knowledge and money creates a closed market of science, culture and opinions independent from the public and private educational establishments. As such, it was becoming a piece of commercial and educational machinery that would promote Mexico’s development. Closely linked to the national tone set by the magazine’s title and the Academy of Letrán’s goal of creating a national literature, the contents, it is now assured, will be mostly produced by Mexican writers and about Mexico, while never forgetting that the magazine is to be a collection of interesting, joyful, and varied articles. Similar statements of purpose are repeated in the introduction to the fourth volume, where the effort of the editors, the commercial success of the magazine, and the role it plays in the promotion of Mexican culture are emphasized.

And then, something happens, again, in 1845. The last volume is produced, the only one directed by Lacunza. At first glance, the change of editor does not seem to have affected the publication, as similar articles continue to be published. Nevertheless, Lacunza’s introduction tells of a critical shift of focus, a modified return

40 “Por su parte los editores, no han omitido ni omitirán medio que conduzca á satisfacer la deuda de gratitud que han contraído. Su primer propósito es el de adoptar constantemente todas las mejoras que se les aconsejen; y para la continuación del tercer tomo tienen el placer de anunciar algunas reformas, que estiman no serán espreciadas por el público”. Prieto and Payno Payno, *El Museo mexicano*, ó miscelánea..., 4.

41 Holmes, *Magazine Journalism*..., 7.

42 Prieto and Payno, *El Museo mexicano*, ó miscelánea..., 3.

43 Prieto and Payno, *El Museo mexicano*, ó miscelánea..., vol. III, 1a época (Mexico City: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1844), 3.

to the rhetoric used in the first volume about the need to educate the popular classes. Unfortunately, in Mexico, most people have no access to knowledge and education due to a culture of privileges and class differences. Therefore, he continues, there is a need “to increase the knowledge of the people” (*el pueblo*)⁴⁴, and the best way to do it is through periodical publications like *El museo mexicano*. Pedagogy has taken the stage again, yet the former insistence about providing a pleasurable experience for the readers is substituted with a discourse about the effectiveness of a literary magazine as an educational tool. The change in rhetoric is striking, as the reader-students the magazine aims to reach are now defined as unhappy workers, with neither money nor time to learn from “books of deep and high instruction”⁴⁵, and the advantages that periodical publications offer are stressed:

“Newspapers, to put it that way, unclothe knowledge from that serious and solemn vestment that dress schools and universities, and in the form of a newscast, a story, they present their readers with a discovery that has cost dilated work and study, and that is part of science’s treasure and the glory of its author. Many men who did not dare open a book that treated science in-depth, because they were afraid not to understand, do not have the same modesty with a periodical publication:

they know that these have been written for them and that their first good quality is to speak to the people in the language of the people”⁴⁶.

This gesture suggests a need for the obliteration of social dissimilarities in education, an opening of the community of publishers and readers to a broader public, to the popular classes, to *el pueblo*. The goal, in theory, is to make more accessible the contents of the publication by making them easy to understand for everybody because civilization, it is argued, is the product of knowledge: “But this elevated mass of knowledge that forms our sciences and our arts, is not the work of one single man. [...] The ability to share from one man to another the ideas that he has acquired, makes them perpetual and makes, to put it that way, the species, and not the individual, the owners of the treasures produced by intelligence”⁴⁷. In the context of what seems to be a subscription to liberal ideals about the democratization of education, these pages also reveal Lacunza’s conservative sensibilities. Implicit in his appeal, there is an conceptualization of society as organic, with its well-defined history and nature and an organization that followed a preestablished order. Moreover, this social organism accumulates knowledge over centuries through experience, customs,

44 “comenzar por igualar las ideas y conocimientos, ó por disminuir en cuanto sea posible esta gran diferencia que hoy existe aumentando el saber del pueblo”. José María Lacunza, ed., *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea*, vol. I, 2a época (Mexico City: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1844), iii.

45 “obras profundas y de alta instrucción”. Lacunza, *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea...*, I, 2a época: iii.

46 “Los periódicos desnudan por decirlo así, al saber, de ese ropage sério y solemne con que se le viste en los liceos y universidades, y en la forma de una noticia, de un cuento, presentan á sus lectores un descubrimiento que ha costado trabajos y estudios dilatados, y que forma el tesoro de la ciencia y la gloria de su autor. Muchos hombres que no se atrevieron á abrir un libro que tratase profundamente una ciencia, porque temerian no entenderlo, no tienen la misma modestia respecto de un periódico: saben que estos se han escrito para ellos, y que su primera buena calidad es hablar al pueblo en la lengua del pueblo”. Lacunza *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea...*, I, 2a época, vi.

47 “Mas esa elevada masa de conocimientos que forma nuestras ciencias y nuestras artes, no es la obra de un hombre solo. [...] La facultad de comunicar un hombre á otro las ideas que ha adquirido, las perpetua y hace por decirlo así, á la especie y no al individuo, propietaria de los tesoros de la inteligencia”. Lacunza, *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea...*, I, 2a época, ii.

and traditions— what Edmund Burke called *prejudice*— in a process that runs its natural course, and cannot be controlled, nor owned, by individuals, for as he argues “[T]he individual is foolish, the multitude, for the moment, is foolish when they act without deliberation, but the species is wise, and when time is given to it, as a species, it always acts right”⁴⁸. That is, man may be naturally intelligent and able to reason, but can easily be corrupted and taken away from his natural path of evolution. For both Burke and Lacunza, who subscribes to this conservative philosophy and its notion of progress, the idea of civilization stays closely linked to morality. It is therefore expected when the later argues that one of the things that hinders the right evolution of the humankind is selfishness:

“Material interests are generally egoistical and evil; meanwhile, the moral ones develop mostly from charity; the first ones are exclusive, and those gained by individuals can hardly be communicated to others, while the second ones are by nature communicative, and grow as they go: these are, therefore, the ones that are important for society to foster”⁴⁹.

Owned by humanity at large, education and knowledge cannot be defined as mere private commodities; on the contrary, they are presented as an intangible good freed from the evils of materiality. That is, in this organic conception of knowledge, science and culture belong to

all humans, regardless of their social status: man dies, but wisdom accumulates over time. Hence the magazine’s community grows also diachronically: starting at the origins of civilization and expanding towards an infinite future. The result: “Illimited hopes of ideal and fantastic progress today, visionary dreams by the souls of the seekers of social happiness, that maybe will be realized in the course of the centuries”⁵⁰. The adverbial phrase in the last sentence is noteworthy, as it introduces the notion that education can only change society slowly, over centuries; that is, through the creation of new prejudices, as opposed to the urgent desire for rapid change that defined liberalism.

The renewed insistence on making education accessible for all social groups exposes the fact that the magazine managed to reach only a limited public. As seen in the introductions written by the editors, this public is revealed as a community, both imagined and explicit, of seekers of the joys of reading and learning, a group with an interactive relation with the publishers, influencing thus the contents of the magazine. The question, therefore, remains whether in the last volume Lacunza managed to extricate *El museo mexicano* from the demanding needs of its established readership and make the contents of its articles, at last, comprehensible for the popular classes, or, as Prieto and Payno had put it, even

48 Edmund Burke, “Speech on the Reform of Representation in the House of Commons,” in *Select Works of Edmund Burke*, vol. 4. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1782), 21.

49 “Los intereses materiales son generalmente egoístas y malévolos, interin los morales tienen su mayor desarrollo en la beneficencia; los primeros son exclusivos y los que cada hombre se procura apenas pueden comunicarse á los demas, interin los segundos son por su naturaleza comunicativos, y al paso que se difunden se aumentan: estos son, pues, los que importa verdaderamente á la sociedad fomentar”. Lacunza, *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea...*, I, 2a época, vi.

50 “Esperanzas ilimitadas de progreso ideal y fantástico el día de hoy, sueños visionarios de almas ambiciosas de felicidad social, pero que acaso el curso de los siglos verá realizarse”. Lacunza, *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea...*, I, 2a época, ii.

for those form “the most undeveloped settlements”⁵¹. And the answer is that of course they were unable to reach the popular classes. However, and in this context, the articles of the magazine serve to disclose some concrete information about the readers to whom it is addressed, chemistry being a good example. The first lesson on the subject appears in the very first volume of the collection. Titled “The Chemical Analysis”, the text is a theoretical introduction to basic principles on the subject and sets the tone for the next articles on the topic: the language is scientific and presupposes a certain level of education to have access to it⁵². After this, a collection of chemical formulas that can be experimented at home appears with some regularity in the following volumes. Some of them have a practical use, like for how to get rid of grease spots on a paper⁵³, how to make dye to cover gray hair⁵⁴, or how to make varnish for your carriage⁵⁵. But most of them, especially in the last volume of the collection, are as frivolous and useless as they are seductive and beautiful, like how to make “Chemical or metallic Vegetations”⁵⁶. These formulas give detailed instructions on how to make mineral flowers mixing different elements, a great number of which, significantly, involve the use of silver, gold, and other expensive materials. Together with formulas on how to cover

copper or ivory with silver, or silver with gold⁵⁷, the Mexican elite, with economic resources and ample time for leisure⁵⁸, is now called to produce beauty thanks to their knowledge of chemistry. Also, there are several formulas for invisible ink, ink for games, ink for secrets. Education for the show and social order subtly defined in the intersection between education and games. Formulas that create separate symbolic rooms for those who have the time and money to waste in silver and play, and for those who don't, but may wish to. Conservative sensibilities at work hand in hand with liberal educational ideals.

Besides, these chemical formulas were also important for other reasons. First, the techniques, measurements, and procedures needed to perform the experiments generated a sense of stability that stood in sharp contrast with the tenor of crisis that defined Mexico at that moment. Second, the methods necessary to carry out the formulas helped create a chemical imagination linked to physical transformations closely related to the intimate sphere of the home, but that can only be understood in the context of the increasing display and socialization of bourgeois bodies. In an era when physiology was rising in popularity, urban life turned more and more into a permanent exhibition space where the city dweller

51 Prieto and Payno, *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea...*, vol. I, 1a época, 3.

52 Prieto and Payno, *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea...*, 1a época, 68-72.

53 *Ibid.*, 328.

54 Lacunza, *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea...*, I, 2a época: 190.

55 *Ibid.*, 285.

56 *Ibid.*, 6, 10, 47, 50, and 75.

57 *Ibid.*, 204 and 297.

58 The high price of the magazine also speaks about the economic resources of its readers. María Esther Pérez Salas, “Hacia una nueva comunicación: prensa e imagen en México a mediados del Siglo XIX”, in *La sociabilidad y lo público. Experiencias de investigación*, ed. Alexandra Martínez and Nelson Antonio Gómez Serrudo (Bogotá: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2016), 157.

became at the same time the observer and a body for the observation of others. From this perspective, it is revealing that many of the formulas offered by *El museo mexicano* were formulas for the betterment of the physique, for the artificial creation of beauty, for a self-regulation that created distance from deterioration: face creams for erasing wrinkles or improving the color of the cheeks, hair color, tooth powder, cream to erase burn marks, and so on. Thus, body improvement and normativity emerged threaded in chemical formulas and helped promote a demand for the products needed to reproduce them. That is, the editors of *El museo mexicano* indirectly encouraged the production of new consumer goods intended for a select class with refined tastes, the buyers of the magazine, and created a circuit of goods that added to the circulation of knowledge offered in its pages.

In the social instability of the 1840s, literary magazines like *El museo mexicano* entered the market, selling science and culture to a wide public. Although the pedagogical program of the publication was rhetorically guided by egalitarian notions aimed to erase the imperfect education of the popular classes and ideas about the self-realization of the citizen through reason and knowledge, the concrete lists of subscribers and the contents of *El museo mexicano* disclose irremediable social tensions between the Mexican elites and said popular classes, showing that the magazine was directed to the specific wealthy, and emotional, community that sponsored its weekly circulation. A closed community not only defined by their class and wealth, but also by their access to knowledge and

their capacity to influence the channels that distributed it. Any man or woman of means that could read—or had the chance to hear being read aloud—, could access the material offered in the magazine and become his own teacher independently of a formal educational system. At least in theory. For the magazine, as it turned knowledge into a commodity created with a specific buyer in mind, shows the power of education in positioning a particular group as elite, in privileging specific forms of practical knowledge and exchange of goods that provided a differential status to the group. Therefore, in *El museo mexicano* the internal discordance created by, on the one hand, a desire to educate the popular classes, and on the other, the consolidation of knowledge as a product exposes some of the issues surrounding the continuities with and oppositions to the liberal script of education as a possible authorizing paradigm of modernity for Mexico during the tragic decade. The dynamics and tensions between liberal ideals about education, as a process fostered by reason, and the more conservative ones guided by the idea that knowledge helps understand human's place in society according to a fixed divine order—as well as the natural and moral course of progress—, also conform the pedagogical program of the magazine collectively. Which is why this publication stands as an example that defies the often-assumed clear-cut separation between liberal and conservative viewpoints about the social role of education. The editors of *El museo mexicano* knew that their scientific articles could never meet the needs of the popular classes and play the role of accessible schools made of paper. Lacunza stopped

the publication after having edited only one volume in order to improve it⁵⁹, but never came back, confirming, on one hand, the economic and political difficulties involved maintaining alive a literary publication of this nature in mid-nineteenth-century Mexico⁶⁰, and, on the other, leaving behind an important, but somewhat unsuccessful in liberal terms, pedagogical program for a period of crisis.

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59 Lacunza *El Museo mexicano, ó miscelánea...*, 568.

60 Arturo Aguilar Ochoa, "El mundo del impresor Ignacio Cumplido," in *Historia de la vida cotidiana en México. Bienes y vivencias. El siglo XIX: 4*, ed. Anne Staples (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México - Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2002), 502.

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