

LANGUAGE INVADERS, DIRTY WORDS, AND INSALUBRIOUS NEOLOGISMS IN PORFIRIAN MEXICO'S CONSERVATIVE PRESS

INVASORES LINGÜÍSTICOS, VULGARIDADES Y NEOLOGISMOS INSALUBRES
EN LA PRENSA DEL MÉXICO PORFIRIANO

Kevin M. Anzzolin.*

ABSTRACT

This article explores a small sampling of the broader discursive climate surrounding conservatism in Porfirian Mexico. I analyze conservative strategies to politically valence language, dictionaries, and especially neologisms. Ironically, Porfirian conservatives consistently activated the language of science—traditionally deemed the remit of liberalism—to gain a foothold in their ongoing cultural war. Finally, I also allude the thought of Émile Durkheim so as to show that Porfirian conservatism ultimately aimed to sacralize the prevailing social order.

KEYWORDS

conservative sensibilities, the press, Mexico, neologisms

Recibido: 18 de abril

RESUMEN

Este artículo explora una muestra del clima discursivo en torno al conservadurismo en el México porfiriano. Se analizan las estrategias que se activaban para poder destacar la carga política del lenguaje, de los diccionarios y, en particular, de los neologismos. Irónicamente, los conservadores del porfiriato emplearon el lenguaje científico (asociado tradicionalmente con el pensamiento liberal) para posicionarse mejor en una disputa cultural. Por último, también hago referencia al pensamiento de Émile Durkheim para plantear que el conservadurismo porfiriano sacralizar el orden social existente.

PALABRAS CLAVE

sensibilidades conservadoras, la prensa, México, neologismos

Aceptado: 5 de junio

* University of Wisconsin-Stout. E-mail: anzzolin@uwstout.edu



“Such is, thus, the character of nineteenth-century eloquence; obsessed with coarse speech but unable to speak it”.

Mauricio Tenorio, “Liberalismo mexicano en tiempos de Hale”¹.

I. PLANES DE NACIÓN AND LANGUAGE GAMES

The nineteenth century was a privileged time for *planes de nación*, for defining citizenry, and for constructing communities alongside and via language games: writing dictionaries, codifying national idioms, and making etymological claims². During the century, the nation-state became a totalizing discourse, and outright ‘language battles’ were waged within these nationalisms³. This “logophilic’ moment” was undoubtedly global in scope⁴, as philology –the study of words, their use, their history and their origins– “captivated the nineteenth century” and was understood as nothing short of a science⁵. Furthermore, “[t]he identification of the state with one nation...implied a homogenization and standardization of its inhabitants, essentially, by means of a written ‘national language’⁶. The symbiosis between language and nation and the push toward the consolidation of a national vernacular was particularly salient

among “Latin American intellectuals who were involved in the process of building their own nations, gaining control over language –over its selection, codification, elaboration, and acceptance”⁷. Some of the region’s most well-known intellectuals –such as Argentina’s Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Venezuelan Andrés Bello, Colombian Rufino José Cuervo, and Peru’s Ricardo Palma– participated in debates related to Spanish: idioms, issues of decorum, and the use of words originating from indigenous languages were all subject to substantial debate and within the context of imaging nations. Oftentimes, the press served as a forum for these debates even while emboldening the debaters.

The present article examines these language battles surrounding a specific lexical element –neologisms– in one particular Latin American time and place (the Mexico of Porfirio Díaz), and via a precise toolkit: the sociological theory of Émile Durkheim. Díaz’s Mexico (1876-1911) –which witnessed the rise of scientifically-inflected politics– provides a crucial moment in which to analyze how language itself was wielded in disputes that we may best refer to as ‘culture wars’⁸. That is, although Graciela Nélica Salto

¹ All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. A menos que se indique de otra manera, todas las traducciones usadas son mías. “Ésta es, pues, la elocuencia decimonónica obsesionada por el habla no culta, y sin poder nombrarla”. See Mauricio Tenorio, “Liberalismo mexicano en tiempos de Hale”, in *Recepción y transformación del liberalismo en México: homenaje al profesor Charles A. Hale*, (coord.) Josefina Z. Vázquez (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1999), 102.

² Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2016).

³ Carlos M. Rama, *Historia de las relaciones culturales entre España y la América Latina: s. XIX* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1982). See especially 115-59.

⁴ University of Chicago, Mauricio Tenorio: <https://news.uchicago.edu/story/historian-mauricio-tenorio-trillo-receives-humboldt-award> (retrieved on January 23, 2020).

⁵ Tuska Benes, *In Babel’s Shadow: language, philology, and the nation in nineteenth-century Germany* (Detroit, Mich: Wayne State UP, 2008), 2.

⁶ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2017).

⁷ José del Valle and Luis Gabriel-Stheeman, “Nationalism, hispanismo, and monoglossic culture”, in *The battle over Spanish between 1800 and 2000: language & ideologies and Hispanic intellectuals*, ed. Jose del Valle and Luis Gabriel-Stheeman. (London: Routledge, 2012), 1-13.

⁸ James Davison Hunter, *Culture wars: the struggle to define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

is correct in interpreting Latin America's nineteenth-century language conflicts as part of the region's search for a common literary language, they were also –and especially in Porfirian Mexico– a war of position as waged within the press and evinced to further antagonistic political ideologies⁹. In the case of Mexico, these distinct political visions can be understood provisionally as 'liberal' and 'conservative' –although I also aim to complicate such Manichean designations. Rather, national visions of neologisms formed part of what Erica Segre sees as the “shifting ground for the discussion of the formation of cultural identities in Mexico– a formation which has historically been predicated on a crisis of legitimacy and a pursuit of singularity”¹⁰.

I thus explore a small sampling of the broader discursive climate surrounding conservatism in Porfirian Mexico; I analyze conservative strategies to politically valence language, dictionaries, and neologisms. Interestingly and ironically, I show that Porfirian conservatives consistently activated the language of science –traditionally deemed the remit of liberalism– to gain a foothold in their ongoing cultural war. Simply said, the immense cultural cachet afforded to science, hygiene, and sanitary thinking during the Porfiriato was undeniable. The article thus serves as a humble addendum to a series of recent scholarship on Mexican conservatism which has cogently shown the categories of 'liberal' and 'conservative' not to be

static, monolithic, or one-sided but rather, changeable, multifocal, and diverse.

Finally and as alluded to above, I activate the thought of Émile Durkheim (especially *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*) so as to show that Porfirian conservatism aimed to sacralize the prevailing social order: their beliefs and values were fundamentally grounded in the lived world and developed in tandem with modernizing projects. As Durkheim claims: “religion is something eminently social. Religious representations are collective representations which express collective realities”¹¹. That is, the ways in which conservatives symbolically imagined their political objectives was very much based in lived reality. Porfirian conservatives promoted a vision of the nation that featured a Christian social order, along with a focus on Hispanic culture, and even norms regarding language. That is, and as Durkheim's reading suggests, a groups' notion of utopia always and already projects their extant value systems. The article concludes with an analysis of a conservative op-ed piece vis-à-vis Durkheimian notions of rites.

Before detailing those language debates –inspired and inflected by the press, and weaponized to forward politics– a brief description of Mexico under Díaz is warranted, with particular emphasis on the conservative thought and its legitimizing strategies.

⁹ Graciela Néllida Salto, “La lengua literaria americana en la crítica de entre siglos”, *Orbis Tertius* 11/12 (La Plata 2006): 1-11.

¹⁰ Erica Segre, *Intersected identities: strategies of visualisation in nineteenth and twentieth-century Mexican culture* (New York, N.Y: Berghahn, 2007), 2.

¹¹ Émile Durkheim and Karen E. Fields, *The elementary forms of the religious life* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 10.

II. THE PORFIRIAN PRESS, CONSERVATIVE RESURGENCE, AND THE MEXICAN ACADEMY'S DIRTY WORDS

While the first half of Mexico's nineteenth century was characterized by the combined tumult of 11-term President Antonio López de Santa Anna, the puppet monarchy of Austrian Emperor Maximilian I, and the loss of more than half of the nation's territory to the United States, the second half of the century enjoyed greater peace, prosperity, modernization, and liberalization. After years of armed conflict, the arrival of the strongman from Oaxaca—President Porfirio Díaz—signaled a precarious armistice with Mexico's conservative factions. The Díaz regime cultivated a so-called 'política de conciliación' with conservatives and especially, with the Catholic Church; behind closed doors, the administration offered the Church a hands-off attitude, so long as clergy abstained from direct critiques of the state. Mexico thus defaulted to Díaz's technocratic form of "central-liberal developmentalism" and continued to be buttressed by the interest of foreign bankers and armed with a heavy dose of Positivism—philosophy that called for the scientific rationalization of the social world¹².

Porfiristas also harnessed the press in hopes of legitimizing their government. In 1896, buoyed by hefty subsidies procured by President Díaz's Secretary of the Treasury José Ives Limantour, newspaperman Rafael Reyes Spíndola founded the daily newspaper *El Imparcial*. Access to government coffers allowed Reyes Spíndola to

buy the most modern printing equipment available, which made easy work of printing of 100,000 copies of the journal in one run. The price of a copy of *El Imparcial* was dropped to a cent, giving the paper an advantage over the three- to six-cents newspapers in Mexico City—oftentimes more politically-charged. Tellingly, in that same year (1896) two of the foremost old-guard liberal newspapers of Mexico's nineteenth century, *El Siglo XIX* and *El Monitor Republicano*, closed operations, unable to compete with Reyes Spíndola's behemoth publication. Yet even though *El Imparcial* remained the big dog during the Porfiriato, the era saw a proliferation of newspapers. As Pablo Piccato astutely shows, the penny-press flourished in the Porfiriato, even as authorities tried to curtail journalistic freedom; smaller publishers oftentimes faced harassment, jail-time, and banishment at the hands of local politicians and crony judges¹³. Thus, Mexican print culture was also a rag-tag ensemble of demimondaine reporters and one-off, renegade rabble-rousers. Moreover, the press, traditionally a cultural medium given to liberalism, now provided a forum not just for the 'informative' press of *El Imparcial*, but also for Catholic papers like *El País*, and far left publications such as *Regeneración*, written by brothers Enrique and Ricardo Flores Magón. All told, beyond the triumphal arches, the *pax porfiriana*, and the *belle epoch* swagger—that jaunty Porfirian *je ne sais quoi* that John Brushwood referred to as a 'special elegance' and what William Beezley called the 'Porfirian persuasion'—ideological conflicts surrounding religion, education,

¹² Leopoldo Zea, *El positivismo en México. Nacimiento, apogeo y decadencia* (México: FCE, 1975).

¹³ Pablo Piccato, *The tyranny of opinion: honor in the construction of the Mexican public sphere* (Durham: Duke UP, 2010).

politics, and history still took place during the Porfiriato—in the press, in academic organizations, and particularly in regards to language¹⁴. Many conservative voices, in particular, never came to accept the politics of reconciliation¹⁵—case in point being the Tomóchic Rebellion, which saw a small community of Christian devotees clash with the Mexican armed forces (1891-1892). Díaz's Mexico could be best described as living what James Davison Hunter first coined 1991 as a type of 'culture war'¹⁶.

It is within this context that Robert Case, José Carmen Soto Correa, and Edward Wright-Ríos (in separate interventions) situate the revival of Mexican conservatism; Case argues that “[t]he conservative resurgence at the beginning of 1877 shows that they never stopped evincing some social, economic, and political influence”¹⁷. Soto Correa similarly locates a new phenomenon within the

conservatives' cultural war starting in roughly 1891, when, even “without the disappearance of collaborative attitudes between church hierarchy and the Porfirian administration, socially-minded Catholicism consolidates as a movement”¹⁸. Finally, Wright-Ríos proposes that the “combination of political and economic stability created fertile conditions for growth within civil society, and devout Catholics took full advantage of the circumstances”¹⁹. Thus, although conservative opposition to the Díaz regime traced its origins across nineteenth-century Mexico, the Porfiriato signaled a reconfigured climate for them: a more socially-savvy Catholicism took hold²⁰, especially during the second half of the Porfiriato and, as I am exploring here in relation to language battles, conservatism took what we know today as a cultural turn²¹. They exalted a sense of *Hispanismo* as a defense against the emboldened Northern empire, the United States, a nation characterized by a

¹⁴ William H. Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and other episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018). See also John Stubbs Brushwood, *Una especial elegancia: narrativa mexicana del porfiriato* (Mexico: UNAM, 1998). For education debates, see especially Charles A. Hale, *Transformation of liberalism in late nineteenth-century Mexico* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2016).

¹⁵ Robert Case, “Resurgimiento de los conservadores en México—1876-1877”, in *Historia Mexicana* 25/2 (Ciudad de México 1975): 204-231.

¹⁶ Hunter, *Culture wars: the struggle to define America...*, 131.

¹⁷ Case, “Resurgimiento de los conservadores...”, 204.

¹⁸ José Carmen Soto Correa, *Movimientos campesinos de derecha en el Oriente Michoacano: comuneros, campesinos, caudillos y partidos* (Mexico: Hoja Casa Editorial, 1996), 465. Also see Richard Weiner, “Trinidad Sánchez Santos: voice of the catholic opposition in porfirian Mexico”, in *Mexican studies/Estudios mexicanos* 17/2 (Oakland CA 2001): 321-349. Soto Correa proposes: “Social Catholicism was the dominant strand in Mexican Catholicism during the last decade of the Porfiriato”, (328-329).

¹⁹ Edward N. Wright-Ríos, *Searching for Madre Matiana: prophecy and popular culture in modern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014), 146.

²⁰ Nora Pérez-Rayón E. and Mario Alejandro Carrillo, “De la derecha radical a la ultraderecha en el pensamiento social católico” *El pensamiento social de los católicos mexicanos*, Ed., Roberto J. Blancarte. (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996), 114: “En sustitución del tema político, aparece, como motivo de comentario y reflexión en el citado diario, el problema social y moral”.

²¹ Manuel Ceballos Ramírez, “Conservadores e intransigentes en la época de Porfirio Díaz”, in *Los rostros del conservadurismo mexicano*, Eds., Renée De la Torre, Marta Eugenia García Ugarte, and Juan Manuel Ramírez Sáiz. (Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social – CIESAS, 2005), 128: “Durante el decenio la Sociedad Católica intentó preservar y recuperar su espacio organizando sus actividades mediante “comisiones”. Estas funcionaron en varios campos y niveles: doctrina, escuelas (elementales y de jurisprudencia), imprentas y publicaciones, prensa, pueblos, artesanos, cárceles, hospitales, indígenas y literatura”. “During that decade the Sociedad Católica tried to preserve and regain ground by way of organizing activities via comisiones. These garnered adherents in different fields and at different levels: through catechism, at schools (elementary and law schools), via printing presses and in publications, in newspapers, towns, via handicrafts, in jails, hospitals, with indigenous communities and via literature” (128). Wright-Ríos suggests a similar timeline: “For the rest of the nineteenth century and during the first decade of the twentieth century, Catholic organizations flourished and multiplied. New Church-affiliated schools, newspapers, seminaries, mutual-aid societies, devotional associations, beneficent institutions, and religious orders sprang up across Mexico”. Wright-Ríos, *Searching for Madre Matiana...*, 146.

heterogeneous social world and Protestant beliefs²². Reborn in the Porfiriato and emboldened by the era's proliferation of the press, conservatism was revived as Antonio Gramsci may have designated as a war of position: Porfirian conservatives invoked moral codes, *hispanismo*, geopolitical hegemony, and even the day's dominant discourse –science– to tactically engage language for their cause. Neologisms were cast as language invaders, dirty words, or insalubrious and used as an ongoing wedge issue; the Royal Spanish Academy (Real Academia Española), appeared as a perfect forum for these issues.

Originally founded in 1713, the Royal Academy began correspondent institutions in Latin America during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century “with the task of lexicographical codification with the aim of unifying, purifying and enriching the Spanish language”²³. The first Latin American academies to be created were those in Colombia (1871), Ecuador (1874), Mexico (1875), El Salvador (1876) and Venezuela (1883). In the case of the Mexican Academy of Language (*Academia Mexicana de la Lengua*):

“most original members...had close associations with the recently defeated conservative party. Gómez Vergara saw them as traitors for having fought against the 1857 Federalist Constitution,

for supporting the Mexican church and for having collaborated with the Austrian imperialist government of Maximilian (1864–7)”²⁴.

Among the twelve founding members of the Mexican Academy of Language were conservatives such as Victoriano Agüeros, Joaquín García Icazbalceta, José María Roa Bárcena, Rafael de la Peña, Luis García Pimentel, and the association's first director, José María de Bassoco. Just as Durkheim explains that groups experience a sense of solidarity and social effervescence when those “parties political, economic or confessional... have periodical reunions where their members may revivify their common faith by manifesting it in common”, the newly-formed Academia Mexicana agreed to meet three times a month²⁵. The Academia evinced a Durkheimian sense of collective enthusiasm: being bound by a common mission that looks beyond the self. The organization explained itself as:

“Living in an agitated age, without a home to call its own, without other resources save for the individual abilities of its academics, and without the valuable peace of mind to apply to drawn-out projects, nor finding itself able to spend money on costly projects”²⁶.

The conservative intellectuals in the Academy thus self-defined as an

²² Brian Hammett, “El partido conservador en México, 1858-1867” in *El conservadurismo mexicano en el siglo XIX*, Ed., William Fowler and Humberto Morales. (Puebla: BUAP-Secretaría de Cultura-University of Saint Andrews, 1999), 313.

²³ Bárbara Cifuentes, “The politics of lexicography in the Mexican Academy in the late nineteenth century”, in *A political history of Spanish*, ed. José del Valle. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), 167-181.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 172.

²⁵ Durkheim and Fields, *The elementary forms...*, 24.

²⁶ Academia Mexicana Correspondiente de la Real Española, *Memorias de la Academia Mexicana Correspondiente de la Real Española*. Tomo I, (México: Imprenta de Francisco Díaz de León, 1876), 9. “Viviendo en época agitadísima, sin morada propia, sin más recursos que los esfuerzos individuales de los académicos, no tiene el sosiego indispensable para consagrarse a trabajos prolijos, ni se halla en estado de costear obras dispensiosas”.

erudite cabal of kindred spirits that, I am suggesting, should be understood as Durkheimian-esque.

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, French sociologist Émile Durkheim sought to uncover the building blocks of belief, and proposed that sentiments of transcendence—inklings of a reality beyond the human sphere—stem from the social world. Events, rites, rituals, and unique conditions catalyze these sensations and pushes communities to a “state when, after a collective effervescence, men believe themselves transported into an entirely different world from the one they have before their eyes”²⁷. Religious belief in particular is society divinized—the sacred is grounded in the social world and any distinctions between the sanctified and the everyday originate in earthly phenomena. Spirituality “not only come[s] from society, but the things which they express are of a social nature”²⁸ and religion is “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them”²⁹. As Durkheim states, “The powers before which the believer prostrates himself are not simply physical forces, such as are given to the senses and the imagination: they are social forces. They are the direct product of collective sentiments which have clothed themselves in a material covering”³⁰. Thus I am

suggesting that the ideology and fervor of Porfirian conservatives can be understood via a Durkheimian toolkit: conservatives activated neologisms within the Mexican Academy—and vis-à-vis the press—to establish authority, legitimate political goals, and effectively render inviolable an element of everyday life.

IV. ALL THE NEWS THAT’S FIT TO PRINT

In Díaz’s Mexico, the press was both lauded and disparaged—lionized and degraded, celebrated and disdained—for its capacity to influence public discourse. The aforementioned Pablo Piccato describes the tense climate of journalism during the Porfiriato, when journalists lost access to special courts (*fueros*), and judges gained new abilities to shutter printing presses and incarcerate most anyone involved in the publication process. Journalists lambasted each other in defamation lawsuits, and oftentimes disputes ended in duels³¹. It is within just such a rambunctious environment that conservatives also sought revenge for past political failures, tactically wielding (again) language games—and especially, neologisms—to forward their revived *plan de nación*.

Conservatives weaponized the press, even as they constantly made the press—especially the ‘sensationalistic’ variety—their whipping boy: it was described not unlike a disease³². Case in point are Feliz Ramos I

²⁷ Durkheim and Fields, *The elementary forms...*, 324.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁰ Émile Durkheim, “Concerning the definition of religious phenomena”, in *Durkheim on religion: a selection of readings with bibliographies and introductory remarks*, (ed.) William S. F. Pickering (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2014), 94.

³¹ Piccato, *The tyranny of opinion...*

³² Goddard J. Adame, *El Pensamiento político y social de los católicos mexicanos: 1867-1914* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1981), 114: “Los católicos conservadores tenían la impresión de que la sociedad mexicana vivía días

Duarte's *Diccionario de mejicanismos* (1895) as well as Joaquín García Icazbalceta's *Vocabulario de Mexicanismos: Comprobado con ejemplos y comparado con los de otros países Hispano-Americanos* (1899) which explicitly disparage the fast-paced, error-laden language of the press. While Ramos I Duarte promises his readers that he has been "working assiduously" to "gather up vicious expressions and phrases that we have heard used by commoners and read in newspapers", García Icazbalceta criticizes the "discredited...language of the press" even while acknowledging that it provides a "laboratory for the use, either good or bad, of certain expressions"³³. Newspapers themselves were said to sow "disorderly microbes"³⁴. A journal from 1877 explains that "admirable machine of the moral

world has a driving force for printing: namely, words....[t]he printing press should be a vessel for holy magisterium, not an arsenal to assemble arms, producing ruination and loneliness"³⁵. In this same vein, an article in the conservative *La Voz de México* and published on October 10, 1897 harangues "reporters of decadence, rummaging through highfaluting phrases or inventing neologisms in order to describe the minutiae of a party"³⁶.

The aforementioned Mexican Academy of Language, too, had bemoaned the press' capacity to degrade public discourse since the organization's founding in 1876; director José María Bassoco opened the June 22, 1876 session of the association promising to "dig a dyke so as to hold back the 'barbarisms' that circulated

de disolución moral. Constantemente aparecían artículos en La Voz que denunciaban los progresos que hacían la embriaguez, el juego, la prostitución y los espectáculos deshonestos entre el pueblo mexicano". "Conservative Catholics held the idea that Mexican society lived in a period of moral dissolution. Articles in La Voz appeared constantly that denounced the gains that drunkenness, gambling prostitution, and lurid entertaining had made within Mexican society".

³³ Félix Ramos i Duarte, "Prólogo", in Félix Ramos i Duarte, *Diccionario de mejicanismos: colección de locuciones i frases viciosas, con sus correspondientes críticas i correcciones fundadas en autoridades de la lengua: máximas, refranes, provincialismos i remoques populares de todos los estados de la República mejicana* (Place of publication not identified: publisher not identified, 1895), 5. "Por esta razón hemos trabajado asiduamente hasta reunir cuantas locuciones i frases viciosas hemos oído en el vulgo i leído en los periódicos, libros impresos (hasta en los diccionarios!) discursos, etc., donde se ha cometido o comete el error a que nos referimos, no con el fin de señalar una falta, sino con el de corregirla". On account of these reasons, we have worked assiduously to collect many vicious expressions and phrases that we have heard among citizens and read in newspapers, printed books (even in dictionaries!), speeches, etc., and where errors have been committed or where the errors continue to be committed, we have not referred to them just a pass judgement but, rather to correct that error". Also see Joaquín García Icazbalceta and Luis García Pimentel, *Vocabulario de mexicanismos*, (México: Tip. y lit. La Europea, de J. Aguilar Vera, 1899), XVII: "Por desacreditado que esté el lenguaje de la prensa periódica, no hay tampoco que hacerle a un lado...puede darnos comprobación del uso, bueno o malo, de ciertas voces; y no olvidemos que para nuestro intento no necesitamos tanto de autoridades de peso que decidan la admisión de un artículo en el Diccionario de la Academia, aunque no estarían de sobre, cuanto de comprobantes del uso." "No matter how degraded language within daily newspaper is, it should not be ignored. In the journalism of olden days...it can provide evidence of the use, whether it be good or bad, of certain registers. And we should not forget that for our affairs we do not so much need the formidable authorities that should decide upon the admission or not into one of the Academy's Dictionaries (even if plentiful). Rather, we should consider the proof of current usage of words."

³⁴ "El microbio de la discordia", *El Imparcial*, June 22, 1910, 1: "La ciudad se encuentra infestada de una nueva epidemia de carácter agudo, proveniente de periódicos microbios, diminutos en sus dimensiones, pero de una virulenta apenas concebida, los cuales tratan, con artículos de furibunda demagogia, de provocar en las masas fiebre revolucionaria" proveniente de periódicos microbios, diminutos en sus dimensiones, pero de una virulenta apenas concebida" "The city finds itself infested by a new, epidemic of a serious character, and which comes from microbic newspapers, downright diminutive in size, but that evince an unheralded virulence."

³⁵ "Bellas Letra", *El Pájaro verde*, July 23, 1877, 1. "La admirable máquina del mundo moral, tiene un motor impreso: la palabra. La imprenta debe de ser vehículo de un magisterio santo, no el arsenal donde se fabrican elementos que llevan por todas partes la ruina y la desolación." "The marvelous machine that is the moral world has a printed engine: the word. The printing press should be a vessel for sacred edification, rather than an arsenal where one produces elements that transmit ruin and desolation."

³⁶ "Poliantea semanal", *La Voz de México*, Oct. 10, 1897, 1: "El que viva lo verá, y contemplará también a los 'repórters' del decadentismo, rebuscando frases altisonantes o inventando neologismos, para describir con exactitud los pormenores de las fiestas" "Whoever is among the living will see it, and will also observe the decadent 'reporters', rummaging through highfalutin or imaginary neologisms, just to describe in detail all the social balls".

in the Mexico City press³⁷, statement that was echoed years later in Peruvian intellectual Ricardo Palma's *Neologismos y americanismos* (1896). Therein, Palma reprimands the Royal Spanish Academy and their official dictionary, accusing them of "exclusivismo". Their dictionary, Palma proffers, constitutes "a sanitary cord separating Spain and the Americas"; for Palma, the Academy's rejection of American neologisms effectively labelled those words as "contagions"³⁸.

Conservative-minded publications advanced such notions of noxious neologisms via their journals: *La Voz de México* (1870-1908), *El Centinela católico* (1880-84), and *El Tiempo* (1883-1912)³⁹. Novels, newspapers, and other texts that did not meet the criteria of conservative voices were characterized as "evil readings" that tempted readers to stray from the "righteous path"⁴⁰. Others claimed journalism to be inherently tainted: "there

is an institution, legitimate daughter of Liberalism that should be considered as a primordial and efficient cause of the disgrace and moral ruin surrounding us all around: this destructive machine against morals, against any order and against all religion... this institution is secular journalism"⁴¹. In *El Heraldo Católico* on January 17, 1891 in an article entitled "Libertad y Licencia", one "Padre Andrés" is quoted as stating that the "invention of the press" is "one of those immoral discoveries that nonetheless honors human ingenuity... in our society, do to laziness or perhaps lack of energy... abuse of the press has taken on serious and fearful proportions"⁴². Again in *El Centinela*, in a May 14, 1882 article entitled "Journalism", it is stated that "among the calamities that afflict humanity, one of the most dangerous among them is journalism"⁴³. Later on, the same paper in a July 25, 1886 article refers to modern 'liberal' journalism simply as a "Cancer"⁴⁴, a common trope among

³⁷ Academia Mexicana de la Lengua, Introducción a las memorias de la Academia Mexicana de la Lengua en versión digital: <https://www.academia.org.mx/obras/publicaciones-de-la-aml-en-linea/memorias-de-la-academia-mexicana-de-la-lengua> (retrieved January 20, 2020). It is explained that the first Academia Mexicana de la Lengua was opened by stating that one of the group's primary objectives was to "poner un dique a los barbarismos que circulaban en la prensa de la capital de la República"—that is, erect a wall to safeguard against the barbarisms that circulated in the press of the capital of the Republic."

³⁸ Ricardo Palma, *Neologismos y americanismos* (Lima: Imprenta y Librería de Carlos Prince, 1896), 16: "Ese exclusivismo de la mayoría académica importa tanto como decirnos: --Señores americanos, el Diccionario no es para ustedes. El Diccionario es un cordón sanitario entre España y América. No queremos contagio americano." "The exclusivism on the part of the majority of the academy is tantamount to telling us: "Dear Americans, this Dictionary is not for you. The Dictionary is a sanitary barrier erected between Spain and the Americas. We do not wish any American contagion".

³⁹ Ciro B. Ceballos, *Panorama mexicano 1890-1910: (Memorias) Estudio introductorio y edición crítica Luz América Viveros Anaya* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2006), 165. The directors of *La Voz de México* were Rafael Gómez, Ignacio Aguilar y Marocho, and Trinidad Sánchez Santos; *El Tiempo*'s director was Victoriano Agüeros.

⁴⁰ "Malas Lecturas", *El Heraldo Diario Católico*, Jan. 5, 1890, 1: "La libertad de pensar, de racionalizar y de escribir en materias de religión y de moral, se ha llevado en la época presente a tal exceso, que casi puede decirse hay en el mundo tantas religiones cuantas conciencias; y todos los días vienen a afligir nuestro celo nuevas producciones irreligiosas e impías, así de la prensa extranjera como de la prensa nacional". "The freedom of thought, the freedom to reason, and the freedom of writing religious and moral subjects has been granted in excess during our present era—so much so that it can almost be said that there are as many religions as there are consciences. And every day appears another immoral and irreligious creations—either from the international or the national press".

⁴¹ "Los católicos y el periodismo" *El Centinela Católico*, Feb. 24, 1884, 1. Also see Víctor Goldgel Carballo, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América: prensa, moda y literatura en el siglo XIX* (La Havana: Fondo Editorial Casa de las Américas, 2016), 56-67, for this same notion that journalism was the Enlightenment's innate vehicle.

⁴² "Libertad y Licencia", *El Heraldo Católico*, Jan. 17, 1891, 1.

⁴³ "El Periodismo", *El Centinela Católico*, May 14, 1882, 1.

⁴⁴ "Cáncer!", *El Centinela Católico*, July 25, 1886, 1: "periodismo liberalesco ha viciado hasta la raíz la literatura nacional" "liberal journalism has poisoned national literature to its roots".

conservative voices in Porfirian Mexico⁴⁵. An article in *El Relámpago* dated on the December 20, 1894 refers to ‘informative’ journals as “messengers of scandal and defamation...that invades”⁴⁶. An article in *El Centinela Católico* from January 20, 1884 put it, liberal writers were doing little short of “poisoning souls”⁴⁷. And finally, in *La Patria* on August 12, 1897, an article titled “Sensationalistic Press” refers to the press as a “plague that invades the metropole”⁴⁸. Others proposed reading the Bible in order to counteract “rhetorical defects such as archaisms, neologisms, mistaken words and technical ones”⁴⁹.

Yet other writers proposed that accepting too many Americanisms would constitute an attack on civilization itself⁵⁰. Neologisms were characterized as evincing their power “with the brutality of a conquistador, which threaten to end in Mexico the language of our forefathers, and if a dyke is not constructed to impede their invasion, Mexicans will begin to speak but a type of French dialect”⁵¹. Of the various neologisms that were seen in and of themselves to be an attack on language and civilization were “clericalismo”⁵², “laicismo” which was “importado de la jerigonza jacobina francesa”⁵³, “educacionismo” which was a “neologismo incomprensible”⁵⁴, “socialism”⁵⁵, and

⁴⁵ “La moral público”, *El bien social*, Sept. 1, 1894, 1: “Hay un cáncer oculto que corroe las entrañas de la sociedad en que vivimos”. “There is a clandestine cancer that corrodes the entrails of our society”.

⁴⁶ “El noticierismo. Reprobacion general”, *El Relámpago*, Dec. 20, 1894, 1: “¡Tal es el periodismo moderno y noticiero que nos invade!... Nuestro periodismo declina; la llaga nauseabunda y contagiosa es bien visible, y la señalamos” “Modern-day journalism and news bulletins invade us...our journalism is in decline; the nauseating and contagious wound is readily apparent, and we shall point it out”.

⁴⁷ “La prensa católica”, *El Centinela*, Jan. 20, 1884, 1: “Entusiasma leer los interesantes periódicos católicos que se publican en los Estados. Cuando son tantos los escritos anticristianos que se introducen en los hogares envenenando las almas, consuela el que haya escritores... que defiendan [...] principios del Catolicismo.” “It’s exciting to read the interesting Catholic newspapers that are published in the US. When the antichristian writings that enter our home are so plentiful, poisoning our souls, it is comforting that there are still writers that defend Christian principles”.

⁴⁸ “La prensa del escándalo”, *La Patria*, Aug. 12, 1897, 1: “Hoy volvemos a ocuparnos de esa plaga que invade la prensa de la metrópoli” “Today we again take up the issue of this plague that invades the city press”.

⁴⁹ Ramón C. Gómez, “La biblia. A mi adorada madre, la Sra. Victoria G. de Gómez”, *El heraldo del hogar*, April 30, 1904, 1: “Natural es que un libro mejor, de un hombre de talento, venga a ocupar nuestro pensamiento y desechemos el mal escrito de estilo vulgar y con algunos defectos retóricos, como, por ejemplo arcaísmos, neologismos, palabras equívocas y las técnicas. Pero lo que no ha sido posible echar al olvido es la Biblia, que, no obstante de ser leída y releída por casi todo el mundo, es el libro constantemente buscado por todos los hombres de ciencia, de talento y de luces”. “It is only natural that better books, written by talented men, should come to occupy our thoughts and that we should undo the badly written, vulgar style of those who evince defective rhetoric—those who use archaisms, neologisms, equivocal words and technicisms. Nevertheless, it has not been possible to throw to the Bible to abysms, a book that—even if it has been read and re-read the world over—is constantly sought after by men of science, of talent, and erudition.”

⁵⁰ “El nuevo diccionario de la academia. Los americanismos”, *El Tiempo*, Nov. 21, 1899, 1: “...Consentir que una lengua se disperse en dialectos, es un ultraje a la civilización; es tanto como levantar barreras intelectuales entre los pueblos, a semejanza de las murallas de la China: y eso no lo hará la academia española, rechazando sin examen, sin discutirlos, los neologismos americanos que en su libro nos propone nuestro estudioso y querido compañero de Lima” “To allow that a language is dispersed throughout the world in dialectics is an insult to civilization: it is as if we were to erect intellectual barriers between populations, no unlike the walls of China. And that is exactly what the Royal Spanish Academy won’t do, rejecting without consideration, without discussion, those American neologisms that our dear and studious colleague from Lima puts forward.”

⁵¹ “El castellano”, *El Tiempo*, Mar. 13, 1884, 1: “Nuestro ilustrado colega *El Voto Público de Morelia*, trae en su número de 6 del corriente, un sensato artículo, en el cual se queja del abandono con que generalmente se ve en la escuela el estudio de nuestra lengua. De ese artículo tomamos los siguientes párrafos: “Los neologismos, con la brutalidad de un conquistador, pretenden enseñorearse de los legítimos dominios que en estas tierras tiene el idioma de nuestros padres; ...[necesitamos] un dique a su invasión”. “Our illustrious colleague *El Voto Público* en Morelia includes in its most recent sixth edition a very sensible article in which the writers complain about the lack of serious that is generally evinced in the study of our language in our schools. From this article, we take the following paragraph: “Neologisms, with the brutality of a conquistador, aim to take over the legitimate dominance that our forefathers’ language has among us... [we need] to erect a barrier against their invasion”.

⁵² “La patria [de papel] y nosotros”, *La Voz de México*, Nov. 17, 1888, 1: The article says that “clericalismo” is an “undefinible neologism”.

⁵³ “Nota editorial. Ciencia y conciencia”, *El Tiempo*, Jan. 22, 1903, 1.

⁵⁴ “La religión en la escuela. Carta abierta al señor Presidente de la República don Francisco I. Madero”, *El Tiempo*, Dec. 4, 1911, 1.

⁵⁵ “La guerra social”, *La Voz de México*, June 19, 1879, 1.

finally “instruccionismo” which is associated with “Protestantismo, filosofismo, racionalismo, liberalismo, nombres que respectivamente formulan sistema de error y heregía perversísima”⁵⁶. Yet other neologisms, related to forms of corporal punishment and practiced in North America –like flogging⁵⁷, ‘lynching’⁵⁸, or ‘electrocutions’⁵⁹– were labeled as barbarous invaders, threatening to bring into Mexico the deeds signified by each respective signifier. All told, conservatives held that it is “liberalism that hides its venom under the façade of order”⁶⁰.

Adding to the irony that conservatives combated the press via the press is the fact that these same voices routinely activated a scientific language that was also common to their liberal antagonists. Such was the paradoxical character of Porfirian politics: conservatives and liberals waged a war of position while wielding discourses that were, for all intents and purposes, universally shared. Thus the

‘suggestive’ power of the press –its ability to convince and cajole readers not unlike one of Gustave Le Bon’s contagions– as simultaneously eroding society’s moral fabric even while having to attract converts to their particular case⁶¹. This jaundiced understanding of journalism on the part of Porfirian conservatives is acutely rendered in an article found in *La Voz de México* and published on March 2, 1889. The front-page article, entitled “The Press in Its Current State: A Force of Good or Evil?” signals the danger of reading sensational newspaper columns, which “reproduce the actions that affect it”⁶². More pithily stated is an article from *El Centinela católico* from a few years previous: “[t]he freedom of the press, or better said, the wild abandon of the press, is a two-edged sword”⁶³. Conservative-leaning Porfirians described neologisms –Gallicisms, technicisms, Anglicisms– with an eye toward not just moral considerations (referring to them as sinful or ethically-inflected) but also in terms of disease, hygiene, borders,

⁵⁶ Wright-Ríos, *Searching for Madre Matiana...*, 153: “Proponents ignored the diversity of Enlightenment thought while radically simplifying history to create a single, malignant threat. Detailed facts hardly mattered, and the narrative remained simplistic, shrill, and repetitive. Nonetheless is also proved compelling and many Catholics at the time. Words like philosophe, individualist, materialist, and freethinker became de facto slurs”.

⁵⁷ “Correspondencia de Nueva York. Flogging. Especial para La Patria”, *La Patria*, February 7, 1907, 1: “Señor Director: Con razón dice en ‘La Grande Revue’ ...que no hay expresión en francés –ni tampoco por fortuna en castellano– capaz de significar en todo su horror el terrible sentido de ese vocablo floggin, que corre por la legislación penal inglesa como una asquerosa mancha, indigna de un pueblo que se jacta de ir a la cabeza de las naciones civilizada”. “Mr. Director: ‘La Grande Revue’ is very correct in suggesting that there isn’t an equivalent expression in French—nor, thankfully, in Castilian—capable of defining all the horror the terrible meaning of the word ‘flogging’, that run through English penal legislation like a disgusting stain, ignoble for a people who boast of being at the head of civilized nations”.

⁵⁸ Claudio Lomnitz, “Mexico’s first lynching: sovereignty, criminality, moral panic”, in *Critical Historical Studies* 1/1 (Chicago 2014): 85-123.

⁵⁹ “Las ejecuciones eléctrica y la prensa”, *El Tiempo*, Aug. 11, 1892, 1: “En uno u otro caso pronto recobrará la prensa periódica la libertad de publicar, con todos sus detalles sensoriales tan sabrosos para el paladar de este público, el relato de lo que aquí ya se denomina generalmente usando un neologismo bárbaro, ‘electrocuciones’. “In one way or another, the daily press will regain the liberty to publish, in all of its sensational details—delicious for the public palate the story that here is referred to as (using the barbarous neologism) ‘electrocutions’.

⁶⁰ “Lo que es el liberalismo”, *La Voz de México*, May 31, 1892, 1.

⁶¹ Goldgel Carballo, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó...*, 59.

⁶² “La Prensa en su Estado actual, ¿es un bien o un mal?”, *La Voz de México*, Mexico City, Mar. 2, 1889, 1: “El cerebro humano, en suma, no es más que un órgano repetidor y multiplicador. Cuando recibe una impresión, sobre todo un cerebro sencillo, irreflexivo, tiende a reproducir el acto que la motive”. The human brain, thus, isn’t more than an organ that multiplies and repeats. When it receives an impression, especially if it is simple, irreflexive, it tends to reproduce whatever act that motivates it”.

⁶³ “La Libertad de Imprenta”, *El Centinela católico*, Feb. 3, 1884, 1: “La libertad, o por mejor decir, el desenfreno de la prensa, es una arma de dos filos”. Liberty, or better said, the runaway press, is a two-sided sword.

and anarchy. The image that conservatives donned –presenting themselves as safeguarding Spanish like a cleaning crew sent to a hazmat accident– thus did jibe with various Porfirian desiderata: Positivist politics, sanitary measures, order and progress. In this way, Brian Connaughton is indeed correct in proposing that “conservatism, without a doubt, was ubiquitous, but it was also indistinct, amorphous, and open to new ideas, values, and sensibilities, according to the dominant perspectives in each region”⁶⁴.

As a final note, metaphors invoking sanitation, the body, science, and geo-political borders used during these language battles culminated during the mid-1890s, but lasted well into Mexico’s twentieth century⁶⁵. No one less than Alfonso Reyes’ –in his “De la lengua vulgar”– compares the intellectual class’ examination of neologisms to a dissection –that is, a science experiment. Notably writing in the post-Revolution, Reyes –unlike Porfirian conservatives– casts the operation as research gone wrong.

V. NEOLOGISMS, RITES, AND A HEARTY SOUP

An October 8, 1905 article penned by one ‘M. Pimentel’ and published in *El Tribuno Católico* provides a concrete (and entertaining) example of how Porfirian conservatives, armed with the power of the press, weaponized neologisms so as to forge common bonds, antagonize liberals and, in the Durkheimian sense, project a ‘sacred’ vision of their lived experience. The article operates via an ‘if-then’ logic, asking readers to believe that too many of Mexico’s youth slavishly admire progress, have rescinded religion, and write badly. Incredibly, Pimentel concludes the article by calling into question the whole business of the press –even raking his own article over the coals– while defending the cogency of his arguments.

Pimentel’s article, entitled “El año del caldo” –that is, “The Year of Broth”– is divided into five sections and constitutes a meditation on generational and ideological differences between older conservatives and younger progressives. Pimentel presents a stock character, “Juan”, who “admires contemporary times and swears off olden days, which he (Juan) characterizes as fallaciousness and ignorance”⁶⁶. According to the article’s speaker, Juan believes his ancestors (that is, men like the author)

⁶⁴ Hanley B. F. Connaughton, *Dimensiones de la identidad patriótica: religión, política y regiones en México, siglo XIX* (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Iztapalapa, 2001), 22: “El conservadurismo, ni dudarlo, estaba difundido, pero estaba difuso, amorfo, y permeable a las nuevas corrientes de ideas, valores y sensibidades, de acuerdo con las orientaciones prevalecientes en cada región”.

⁶⁵ Untitled, *El Amigo de la Juventud: Órgano de la Sociedad Mexicana Sanitaria y Moral*, June 1, 1913, 1: “Una de las enfermedades mentales más comunes en la época actual, consiste en inventar palabras, ignorando que los neologismos solo son permitidos cuando el idioma carece de palabras para significar lo que con la nueva se desea, y, en tal caso, es preciso acompañar dicho neologismo de su definición, hasta que sea ya admitido como moneda corriente.” “One of the most common psychological diseases in contemporary times consists of inventing words, when we forget that neologisms are only permitted when our language lacks words necessary to signal that concept and, in that case, it is essential to include a definition with that neologism, until the time when it can be accepted as commonplace”.

⁶⁶ M. Pimentel, “El año del caldo”, *El Tribuno Católico*, Oct 8, 1905, 2: “Juan es un joven montado a la moderna. Admira los tiempos presentes y reniega de los pretéritos, llamados por él de obscurantismo y de ignorancia”.

are unfortunate since they “Don’t worship the Goddess of Reason / Nor were they devotees of progress / Nor did they travel by train / Nor did they communicate across long distances by telegraph or by telephone / Nor were they able to hear their own voice, preserved and reproduced by the phonograph”⁶⁷. Young men like Juan, so explains the article’s narrative voice, believe men like Pimentel to hold a grudge against the younger generation. The older generation are resentful of the younger generation because, so the article suggests, they (the elders) “never ate ‘foie-gras’, ‘plum-pudding’, and other dishes imported from ‘abroad’”⁶⁸. Rather, this older generation consumed but “boring stews and broths” –here the author using more traditionally ‘Hispanic’ words like *pucheros* and *caldo*⁶⁹. As the article continues, it becomes increasing apparent that the voice of the article prefers *caldo* because “es un líquido bastante sólido” –“it’s a hearty stew”; it’s substantive, nutritious, and not just another newfangled ‘designer’ cuisine⁷⁰. Connoisseurs of *caldo* are also more devoted to the tenets of Catholicism than the younger generation; Pimentel’s ‘broth brothers’ “know how to take communion with dignity / And heed God’s call / And go to confession”⁷¹. By the end of the article, the author’s

extended culinary metaphor culminates with a visit by none other than the Devil himself, who serves the youngbloods their proverbial last desserts: “Satan will serve the impious with a sauce they themselves have cooked up: ‘Deviled Sauce’⁷².

Striking for our considerations here are the language politics that Pimentel evokes throughout the piece; the author abrades the younger generation for their predilection for neologisms, their unimaginative admiration for all things foreign, and their abuse of language. The new generation lives in bad faith, they may even “drink ‘broth,’ yet baptize it with the more mellifluous word ‘consommé’”⁷³. Such pretentious renaming “is a very English habit... Or very Yankee! And because of this, those aforementioned anti-broth-ites are drunk on words, on professions, and thoughts. When they speak, their language is unrefined”⁷⁴. Later on, Pimentel urges us to “return to the broth; let’s not ‘digresse’”. What a resounding word! And oh, how absolutely new! And oh, what concise sentences! It wasn’t common to write like that in the olden days when broth was the king of foodstuffs⁷⁵. Finally, the author begrudgingly acknowledges that “today we write differently. Short sentences, but clumsy ones. This article serves as proof”⁷⁶.

⁶⁷ M. Pimentel, “El año del caldo”, *El Tribuno Católico*, Oct 8, 1905, 2: “Ni rendían culto a la diosa Razón. / Ni eran adoradores del progreso. / Ni viajaban por el ferrocarril. / Ni se comunicaban a larga distancia por medio del telégrafo o del teléfono. / Ni oyeron su voz, conservada y reproducida por el fonógrafo.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2: “No se alimentaban con ‘foie-gras,’ ‘plum-pudding,’ y otros platillos importados de ‘Extranjijis’.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2: “El soso ‘puchero’ y con el insípido ‘caldo’.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 2: “El caldo es un líquido bastante sólido. Líquido por lo que respecta a su estado de cuerpo; sólido por lo nutritivo de sus componentes”.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2: “...Y saben comulgar dignamente. / Y oyen la palabra de Dios. Y hace confesión general.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 2: “Y por tan poderosa razón, Satanás obsequiará a los impíos con una salsa de su invención. / Pues, con la ‘Salsa endiablada’.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 2: “Y beben caldo, pero bautizado con el nombre de ‘consommé.’”

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2: “¡Esa es una práctica muy inglesa! O muy yankee! Y por eso, ellos, los anticaldistas susodichos, están crudos en palabras, obras y pensamientos. Cuando hablan tienen crudezas en el lenguaje.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2: “Pero volvamos al caldo; no ‘digresionemos.’ / ¡Qué palabrita tan sonora! / ¡Y tan nuevecita! / ¡Y qué renglones tan cortitos! No se acostumbraba escribir así en la época en que el caldo era el rey supremo de los alimentos”.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 2: “Y hoy se escribe de distinta manera. / Renglones cortitos, pero malos. / En este artículo tendrán ustedes la prueba”.

All told, the reader is urged to “disdain the form of this article, but sift through it for the brothy goodness of our classic stew: Substance!”⁷⁷ Pimentel’s piece thus serves as an example of the rather contradictory attitude toward the press among more conservative *hombres de bien*, who critiqued the press via that same forum. For them, the press is an immoral means to a better end.

The type of criticism Pimentel levels at liberals here –as being intoxicated by novelty and imagined change– can be best analyzed (and already seen above) via a Durkheimian-esque toolkit. In Book Three of Durkheim’s *The Elementary Forms...*, the sociologist defines his dual concepts of positive and negative rites, which are different from one another yet, “intertwined...they presuppose one another”⁷⁸. While negative rites preserve limits between the sacrosanct and the mundane (keeping kosher, separation from the collective, etc.) positive rites forge a sense of community, of ties that bind⁷⁹. While positive rites “set collectivity in motion”, negative rites function to “inhib[it] activity” which often entails the “control of language”⁸⁰. Effectively, Pimentel’s article tasks readers to participate in both these ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ activities; on one hand, the piece attempts to forge a like-minded community of readers. On the other hand, it does this by recoiling from certain words, certain dishes, and certain activities. Pimentel’s article is but a small, albeit entertaining part of a larger cultural

battle, in which neologisms and reading materials serve as a wedge issue. As a final note, Durkheim’s description of rites also allows us to observe how communities like conservative-leaning Porfirians take on a different salience and function vis-à-vis modern life. While Durkheim’s thought proposes that rites are performed during a specific, unique time, reading newspapers and imagining other conservative-minded *hombres de bien* necessitates a notion of “homogenous, empty time”⁸¹. Pimentel’s article asks readers to telescope back to a mythical time, when soup was soup, and we weren’t served some half-baked, watered-down *nouveau cuisine*.

VI. LIBERAL-LEANING RIPOSTES, THE SAME SCIENCE, AND EVOLUTION

Until now, we have seen that conservative voices employed the acceptance or rejection of neologisms as a wedge issue in an ongoing culture war; moreover, a Durkheimian-inspired terminology has allowed us to explore how Porfirian conservatives fomented a sense of ‘effervescence’ during discussions surrounding language, as well as providing us a sense of the ‘rites’ surrounding their language games.

Were liberal-leaning Porfirians more willing to accept the neologisms, Gallicisms, and Americanisms that conservatives rescinded? A second sampling of journalism written during the Porfiriato

⁷⁷ M. Pimentel, “El año del caldo”, *El Tribuno Católico*, Oct 8, 1905, 2: “Desdeñad su forma, pero buscad en él lo que en el caldo de nuestro clásico cocido: ¡La substancia!”

⁷⁸ Durkheim, *The elementary forms...*, 303.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 300-370; especially from 340 on.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 352; 313; 309.

⁸¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities...*, 12.

suggests some important points of difference. First, more liberal-leaning publications critiqued the perceived stodginess of the Royal Spanish Academy and its affiliated, regional institutions. Secondly, it was proposed that Spanish needed to evolve –the language should evince a type of flexibility that would allow it to take part in an international community characterized by commerce, creativity, and science. Evolution –privileged theory of nineteenth-century scientific thought– was presented as applicable to languages as well. In sum, scientific discourse was an inevitable reference for most any Porfirian argumentation.

Liberal-leaning publications expressed the idea that the Royal Academy's fustian ways had led to intellectual myopia. Case in point is an article from *El Contemporáneo* titled "Grammaticism"; the article complains that various Spanish literati:

"do not see that revolutionary force works by way of phonetical changes (sound modifications), via analogical changes, and with the inclusion of neologisms, which are all necessary for the life of language, so that it doesn't die from a lack of commonsense and flexibility"⁸².

The article describes those grammarians that impede the transformation

of language as suffering from 'mental rickets' –essentially, a psychological illness. For many liberal publications, the Royal Academy or even Spain writ large was characterized as– like one writer sardonically put it –an "enemy of new words, because they risk altering the calm tranquility that reigns in the highest regions of incurable laziness"⁸³. But two years earlier, the same newspaper in an article entitled "Evolution of Hispano-American Language" attacked "institutions that aim to base their own life on the principle of unchangeability [which] necessarily succumbs without having reached either a prosperous nor lasting existence"; this same article goes on to claim that "the supreme law of life is that of adaptation"⁸⁴. This notion of evolution was a whetstone for liberal publications in Díaz's Mexico that dealt with language and especially, neologisms.

In an July 10, 1889 article in *El Siglo XIX* entitled "Instrucción pública y el idioma", we are told it is "natural that conservatives, who march forwards backwards, forever looking back, want us to return to the 'legitimate pronunciation of our conquistadors... nevertheless, they need realize that history always affirms the constant transformation of languages and the impossibility of returning'⁸⁵. The same newspaper, in a January 29, 1871

⁸² "El Gramaticalismo", *El Contemporáneo*, Jan. 20, 1900, 1: "No ve que la fuerza revolucionaria que obra por alteraciones fonéticas o sea de sonido, por cambios analógicos y por neologismos, es necesaria a la vida del lenguaje". "They do not see that the revolutionary force that creates phonetic changes or modified sounds, that works through synonym and neologisms is necessary for the well-being of language".

⁸³ "Mamolatría", *Siglo Diez y Nueve*, Jan. 18, 1872, 1: "Enemiga de novedades, porque ellas alterarían la placida calma que reina en las elevadas regiones de su incurable pereza". "An enemy of novelty, because newness alters the peaceful calm that predominates in the heights of their incurable laziness".

⁸⁴ Manuel Rodríguez Navas, "Evolución de la Lengua Hispano-Americana", *El contemporáneo*, Feb. 4, 1908, 1: "Las instituciones que pretenden basar su propia vida en el principio de la invariabilidad, necesariamente sucumben sin haber alcanzado una existencia próspera ni duradera." "La ley suprema de la vida es la ley de adaptación: de la adaptación al medio, a las circunstancias, a los tiempos, a las mutaciones incesantes y a las transformaciones periódicas a que sujeto se halla todo organismo vivo".

⁸⁵ "Instrucción pública y el idioma", *El Siglo XIX*, July 10, 1889, 1: "En la larga evolución de las sociedades, las diversas razas que constituyen la especie humana, nacen, viven y mueren como las celdillas del organismo, o por mejor decir, las lenguas tienen una vida más corta que la de las razas".

article lauds Spanish for always being a “fusion of various languages”⁸⁶. In 1889, a *Diario del hogar* warns readers not to become scandalized before the notion of ‘evolution of language’, as it is a law of nature⁸⁷. Yet other newspapers examine the flexible of English, of Japanese, and lament that Spanish is not accepting scientific-savvy technical language fast enough⁸⁸. The liberal preoccupation that Spanish was not accepting enough of technical language was a constant throughout the Porfiriato: “It is awful having to witness the hypertrophy of the Spanish language as an instrument of scientific communication”⁸⁹. Another article argues that technical language having to do with train travel have been part of Spanish for so long that they aren’t even true Anglicisms—they are “our Anglicisms”⁹⁰.

A final example is found in an article published in the old-guard liberal newspaper *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*—and written under Hilarión Frías y Soto’s nom de plume ‘El Portero del Liceo Hidalgo’.

Frías y Soto, a member himself of the Mexican Academy of Language, condemns Rafael Ángel de la Peña (mentioned briefly above) for his (de la Peña’s) overly zealous ‘protection’ of Spanish. De la Peña held positions both in the Mexican Academy and the Spanish Royal Academy, and Frías y Soto sardonically recounts how:

“when the inevitable and continuous contact between peoples leads to an immigration of spurious elements, academics and hygienists disinfect for those folks the population and for others, their mother tongue... Mr. Ángel de la Peña is an enthusiastic and a zealous vigilante of the Spanish language, and, should he have his druthers, would stretch more than a sanitary cord to preserve us from the entrance of foreign words; rather, he would erect a Great Wall of China there, closing off the path from any migrant bohemian.... The conservative Academies of Language work like the Sanitary police do in our cities: they prevent our collective life from foreign elements that may cause us illness and alter our way of life”⁹¹.

⁸⁶ “Mosaico”, *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, Jan. 29, 1871, 1. “fusión de varios idiomas; bien que, como todo va en progreso, no serán ya entonces las lenguas del Norte, el latín y el árabe sus exclusivos generadores sino que para alcanzar sus exclusivos generadores, sino que para alcanzar tan grandioso objeto habrán prestado su contingente todos los idiomas del mundo”.

⁸⁷ “Martirologio de la lengua castellana”, *Diario del hogar*, Aug. 31, 1889, 1: “En esto, como en todo, se cumplen las leyes de la naturaleza; y aunque muchos se escandalizan ante el solo nombre de evolución, es ésta una de las leyes naturales más sólidamente establecidas”

⁸⁸ Luis Carbó, “Los japoneses y su idioma”, *El mundo ilustrado*, June 26, 1904, 1: “Además—y en esto consiste el mayor mérito—en vez de calcar servilmente sus palabras nuevas en las nuestras, ellos se ingenian para definir el objeto con un término propio, en tanto que nuestros neologismos, casi todos derivados del latín o del griego, son, casi siempre, vagos. Daré algunos ejemplos. La palabra “cinematógrafo”, significa, según su etimología, “que registra el movimiento”. “Moreover—and this is their most laudable characteristic—rather than slavishly copy their new words from our, they mediate on inventing their own word to define the term, and meanwhile our neologisms, most of which are from Latin or Greek, are rather imprecise. I will provide some examples: The word “cinematography” which means, according to its etymology, “that which records movement”.

⁸⁹ “Perdemos el idioma”, *El Imparcial diario ilustrado*: Sept. 19, 1910, 1: “Es penoso advertir la hipertrofia del idioma español como instrumento de expresión de las ideas científicas”. “It is sad finding out the inability of Spanish as an instrument to express scientific ideas”.

⁹⁰ “Nuestros anglicismos”, *El Siglo Diez y nueve*, June 13, 1882, 1.

⁹¹ “Por la academia. Rafael Ángel de la Peña”, *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, July 20, 1895, 1: “Y cuando el inevitable y continuo contacto que hay hoy entre los pueblos, produce la inmigración de elementos espurios, los académicos y los higienistas desinfectan éstos la población y aquellos la lengua madre. El Sr. Ángel de la Peña es un entusiasta y celoso guardián del idioma castellano, y quisiera tender en torno de éste, más que un cordón sanitario que lo preservara de la entrada de palabras extranjeras, la muralla de China, cerrando así el paso a todo bohemio inmigrante. “Las Academias conservadoras del lenguaje funcionan como los Consejos sanitarios en las ciudades: evitando la invasión en la colectividad de elementos exóticos que enfermen a ésta y alteren su modo de ser”. “And when the inevitable and continuous contact that there is today between peoples finally gives way to the immigration of spurious elements, scholars will need to disinfect the mother tongue while hygienists disinfect the population. Mr. Ángel de la Peña is an enthusiastic and zealous guardian of Castilian, and would prefer to rope it off, using far more than just a sanitary barrier that safeguards it

Frías y Soto continues to backhandedly compliment De la Peña's 'erudition'—that is, De la Peña's conservative impulse to render sacred his (De la Peña's) social reality. Alternatively for Frías y Soto, languages have always changed over time—they must, in order to survive.

In conclusion, Porfirian discussion surrounding the acceptance and appropriateness of neologisms can be understood as part of an ongoing culture war in which conservative and liberal grievances were aired. And yet, seemingly no one, no matter political sympathies, could avoid employing the Porfiriato's ultimate hegemonic discourse—science. That is, as Leopoldo Zea shows, scientific knowledge held a universal appeal, "but the form in which it was interpreted and applied by the Mexicans is Mexican"⁹². Finally, reference to Durkheim's theories on social effervescence, religious thought, and rites help us to understand how conservative thinkers in the Porfiriato forged a sense of community and strategically employed notions of language invaders, dirty words, and insalubrious neologisms to advance their particular *plan de nación*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Academia Mexicana correspondiente de la Real Española. 1876. *Memorias de la Academia Mexicana correspondiente de la Real Española*. Tomo I. México: Imprenta de Francisco Días de León.

Academia Mexicana de la Lengua, *Memorias de la Academia Mexicana de la Lengua en versión virtual*: <https://www.academia.org.mx/obras/publicaciones-de-la-aml-en-linea/memorias-de-la-academia-mexicana-de-la-lengua>. (retrieved on January 16, 2020).

Adame, Goddard J. 1981. *El pensamiento político y social de los católicos mexicanos: 1867-1914*. Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Anderson, Benedict R. OG. 2016. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso.

Beezley, William H. 2018. *Judas at the Jockey Club and other episodes of porfirian Mexico*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Benes, Tuska. 2008. *In Babel's Shadow: language, philology, and the nation in nineteenth-century Germany*. Detroit, Mich: Wayne State UP.

Brushwood, John Stubbs. 1998. *Una especial elegancia: narrativa mexicana del porfiriato*. Mexico: UNAM.

from the entrance of foreign words. Rather, he'd like to erect a Great Wall of China, thus closing of the admission of any migrant bohemian. "The conservative Academies of Language serve not unlike the Health and Sanitary commissions in cities: preventing that the collective is invaded by exotic elements that make the population sick and transform their way of being".
⁹² Leopoldo Zea, *El positivismo en México. Nacimiento, apogeo y decadencia* (Mexico: FCE. 1975), 12.

Case, Robert. 1975. "Resurgimiento de los conservadores en México 1876-1877". *Historia Mexicana* 25/2 (Ciudad de México): 204-231

Ceballos, Ciro B. 2006. *Panorama mexicano 1890-1910: (Memorias) Estudio introductorio y edición crítica Luz América Viveros Anaya*. Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Ceballos Ramírez, Manuel. 2005. "Conservadores e intransigentes en la época de Porfirio Díaz", in *Los rostros del conservadurismo mexicano*, Eds., Renée De la Torre, Marta Eugenia García Ugarte, and Juan Manuel Ramírez Sáiz, 123-138, Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social – CIESAS.

Cifuentes, Bárbara. 2013. "The politics of lexicography in the Mexican Academy in the late nineteenth century", in *A political history of Spanish*, ed. José del Valle, 167-181, Cambridge: Ed. Cambridge UP.

Connaughton, Hanley B. F. 2001. *Dimensiones de la identidad patriótica: Religión, política y regiones en México, siglo XIX*. México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Iztapalapa.

Del Valle, José and Luis Gabriel-Stheeman. 2012. "Nationalism, hispanismo, and monoglossic culture", in *The battle over Spanish between 1800 and 2000: language & ideologies and hispanic intellectuals*, ed. Luis Gabriel-Stheeman and Jose del Valle. 1-13, London: Routledge Press.

Durkheim, Émile, and Karen E. Fields. 1995. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: The Free Press.

Durkheim, Émile. 2014. "Concerning the Definition of Religious Phenomena", in *Durkheim on religion: a selection of readings with bibliographies and introductory remarks*, ed. William S. F. Pickering, 75-99, Cambridge: James Clarke & Co.

García Icazbalceta, Joaquín, and Luis García Pimentel. 1899. *Vocabulario de mexicanismos*. México: Tip. y lit. "La Europea", de J. Aguilar Vera.

Goldgel Carballo, Víctor. 2016. *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América: Prensa, moda y literatura en el siglo XIX*. Havana: Fondo Editorial Casa de las Américas.

Hale, Charles A. 2016. *Transformation of liberalism in late nineteenth-century Mexico*. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton UP.

Hammett, Brian. 1999. "El partido conservador en México, 1858-1867", in *El conservadurismo mexicano en el siglo XIX*, ed. William Fowler and Humberto Morales, 313-337, Puebla: BUAP-Secretaría de Cultura-University of Saint Andrews.

Hobsbawm, Eric J. 2017. *Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hunter, James Davison. 1991. *Culture Wars: the Struggle to Define America*. New York: Basic Books.

Lomnitz, Claudio. 2014. "Mexico's first lynching: sovereignty, criminality, moral panic", in *Critical Historical Studies* 1/1 (Chicago): 85-123.

Morales Moreno, Humberto y William Fowler. 2002. "Génesis y evolución del pensamiento conservador en México durante el siglo XIX", in *El pensamiento conservador en México*, ed. Dora Kanoussi, 49-73. Mexico: Plaza y Valdés Editores.

Palma, Ricardo. 1896. *Neologismos y americanismos*. Lima: Imprenta y Librería de Carlos Prince.

Rafael Ángel de la. 1876. *Discurso sobre los elementos constantes y variables del idioma español*. Mexico: Imp. de Francisco Díaz de León.

Pérez-Rayón E, Nora and Mario Alejandro Carrillo, "De la derecha radical a la ultraderecha en el pensamiento social católico" in *El pensamiento social de los católicos mexicanos*, ed., Roberto J. Blancarte, 121-141. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Piccato, Pablo. 2010. *The tyranny of opinion: honor in the construction of the Mexican public sphere*. Durham: Duke UP.

Rama, Carlos M. 1982. *Historia de las relaciones culturales entre España y la América Latina: s. XIX*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Ramos i Duarte, Félix. 1895. *Diccionario de mejicanismos: colección de locuciones i frases viciosas, con sus correspondientes críticas i correcciones fundadas en autoridades de la lengua: máximas, refranes, provincialismos i remosques populares de todos*

los estados de la República mejicana. [Place of publication not identified]: [publisher not identified].

Salto, Graciela Nélide. 2006. "La lengua literaria americana en la crítica de entre siglos", in *Orbis Tertius* 11/12 (La Plata): 1-11.

Segre, Erica. 2007. *Intersected identities: strategies of visualisation in nineteenth and twentieth-century Mexican culture*. New York, Berghahn.

Soto Correa, José Carmen. 1996. *Movimientos campesinos de derecha en el Oriente Michoacano: comuneros, campesinos, caudillos y partidos*. Mexico: Hoja Casa Editorial.

Tenorio, Mauricio. 1999. "Liberalismo mexicano en tiempos de Hale", in *Recepción y transformación del liberalismo en México homenaje al profesor Charles A. Hale*, (coord.) Josefina Z. Vásquez, 91-104. Mexico: El Colegio de México.

University of Chicago, Mauricio Tenorio: <https://news.uchicago.edu/story/historian-mauricio-tenorio-trillo-receives-humboldt-award> (retrieved on January 23, 2020).

Weiner, Richard. 2001. "Trinidad Sánchez Santos: voice of the catholic opposition in porfirian Mexico", in *Mexican studies/Estudios mexicanos* 17/2 (Oakland, CA): 321-349

Wright-Rios, Edward N. 2014. *Searching for Madre Matiana: Prophecy and Popular Culture in Modern Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Zea, Leopoldo. 1975. *El positivismo en México. Nacimiento, apogeo y decadencia*. Mexico: FCE.

Newspaper Sources

Amigo de la Juventud, El.

Centinela católico, El.

Heraldo Católico, El.

Pájaro Verde, El.

Relámpago, El.

Tiempo, El.

Voz de México, La.