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# **Celebrating** *Insurrection*

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# **Celebrating** *Insurrection*

The Commemoration  
and Representation  
of the Nineteenth-  
Century Mexican  
*Pronunciamiento*

Edited and with an introduction by  
**W I L L F O W L E R**

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## Preface

This book is about revolutions and fiestas. To be more specific, it is about a very particular kind of revolution: the nineteenth-century Mexican *pronunciamiento*, and how this intriguing insurrectionary practice was celebrated at the time and commemorated thereafter. It is also concerned with how the *pronunciamiento* was perceived, depicted, and represented by Mexicans and foreigners who witnessed and/or participated in one or several of them. Given that there were more than fifteen hundred *pronunciamientos* between the achievement of independence in 1821 and the *pronunciamiento* that brought Porfirio Díaz to power in 1876, their regular celebration paired with the ambivalent impact they had on the country merits careful consideration.

Unlike full-scale revolutions that occur once or twice in the history of a nation and arguably change it forever, displaying in so doing a clear and unambiguous legacy, the frequent and regular *pronunciamientos* that were staged in Mexico from 1821 to 1876 were, in contrast, full of contradictions and mixed signals. Many *pronunciamientos* were initiated to address genuine political concerns and to overcome concrete instances of injustice, and yet in adopting what amounted to a blatantly unconstitutional insurrectionary practice, *pronunciados* also contributed to Mexico's notorious chronic instability.

As becomes poignantly evident in this book, pronunciamientos were celebrated, commemorated, and yet condemned at the same time. The men who led them were likewise damned *and* venerated. Unlike the sanctified heroes of the U.S. and Mexican Revolutions of Independence (George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, José María Morelos) — whose unambiguous patriotism, selflessness, and righteousness continue to be celebrated to this very day on the Fourth of July and the Sixteenth of September in their respective countries, regardless of whether they were the wonderful individuals we have been led to believe they were — the commemorated pronunciadados of nineteenth-century Mexico were characterized by their flawed heroism. They were the interpreters of the ignored and trampled will of the nation. But they were also outlaws who “pronounced” to gain power or promotion and to indulge in all forms of plunder. Studying the contradictory treatment pronunciamientos received reveals a number of crucial aspects of the pronunciamiento as an ambivalent revolution of sorts as well as of Mexican political culture. A key aim of this volume is precisely to decipher what the noted ambivalence tells us about the practice as a necessary yet problematic means of informing political change, and of the culture that reluctantly endorsed it, celebrating the pronunciamientos when they happened, rapidly forgetting them soon after.

*Celebrating Insurrection* provides at one level, and for the first time, a collection of individual yet interrelated studies on the role civic fiestas played in informing the Mexican people’s collective response to these nineteenth-century revolutions “of sorts.” How, for instance, did the celebrations that followed the triumph of most pronunciamientos sacralize and/or legitimize their role and that of their leaders in Mexican history? Did the fiestas that celebrated

the victorious pronunciamientos and pronunciados contribute to the legitimizing of the pronunciamiento as an accepted metaconstitutional means of effecting political change? And if so, why were these celebrations ineffective in ultimately consecrating the role of the pronunciamiento as a force for good?

There are chapters on the memory, representation, and influence of seminal pronunciamientos such as Rafael del Riego's 1 January 1820 pronunciamiento of Cabezas de San Juan, which forced King Ferdinand VII to restore the liberal 1812 Constitution; Agustín de Iturbide's 24 February 1821 pronunciamiento of Iguala, which brought about Mexican independence; and Porfirio Díaz's action of 2 April 1867, which signaled the end of the French Intervention. There are also essays on how the pronunciamientos and pronunciados of the 1820s–1840s were actually celebrated in Jalisco, San Luis Potosí, and Yucatán as well as during the Mexican-American War. These case studies eloquently describe what the fiestas entailed, highlight the thinking behind their organization and ceremonies, and analyze how the events that gave rise to them were manipulated by the authorities and the pronunciados' supporters with varying degrees of success. The mixed fortunes that flawed heroes such as Agustín de Iturbide, José Márquez, Joaquín Gárate, Santiago Imán, Ignacio Comonfort, Juan Bustamante, and Porfirio Díaz enjoyed *and* suffered as figures of both veneration *and* damnation in fiestas and historiographical texts are also researched in depth, providing valuable insights into the paradoxical nature of the pronunciamiento, a practice that was unlawful yet allegedly legitimate, as well as into the difficulty Mexicans had in overlooking the flaws of the pronunciamientos' heroes. Two chapters address contemporary historical representations of this phenomenon, focusing on

how the Mexican intelligentsia of the early national period and the foreign travelers of the time understood the pronunciamiento, as it became part of past and present concepts of Mexican nationhood and political culture during the nineteenth century.

In the first of four volumes on the pronunciamiento of independent Mexico, *Forceful Negotiations: The Origins of the Pronunciamiento in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* — (2010), we established that the pronunciamiento was a phenomenon that became common in the Hispanic world in the nineteenth century. We argued that it was a practice (part petition, part rebellion) that sought to effect political change through intimidation and that was adopted to negotiate forcefully. We showed, moreover, that the pronunciamiento developed alongside Mexico's constitutions and formal political institutions and was resorted to, time and again, to remove unpopular politicians from positions of power, put a stop to controversial policies, call for a change in the political system, and promote the cause of a charismatic leader and/or the interests of a given region, corporate body, or community. We concluded that the pronunciamiento became *the* way of doing politics. In the second edited volume of our pronunciamiento tetralogy, *Malcontents, Rebels, and Pronunciados: The Politics of Insurrection in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (2012), we explained why this was the case. The process whereby the pronunciamiento went from originally being a military-led practice to one that was endorsed and employed by civilians, priests, indigenous communities, and politicians from all parties was traced through the study of a rich variety of pronunciamientos stretching from Tlaxcalan pueblo political activities in the late colonial period to a socialist *levantamiento* (uprising) with anarchist overtones in Chalco in 1868, with the stress being on individual and collective motivation.

In this third volume in the series we are interested in how Mexicans tried to come to terms with this practice, how they attempted to legitimize it by celebrating it and including it in their repertoire of civic fiestas, and how these fiestas came to reflect the ambivalence people felt toward the pronunciamiento. We provide an innovative and revisionist collection of essays, written by some of the leading authorities in the field, seeking to explain how pronunciamientos were celebrated, remembered, commemorated, and represented. What emerges is a striking interpretation of a phenomenon that was characterized by its duality and ambivalence, one that was experienced as a necessary evil, celebrated yet criticized, reluctantly justified, its heroes both damned and venerated. We hope this volume offers the reader a challenging collection of interpretations of and explanations for the reasons Mexicans, as individuals and members of given communities, celebrated yet struggled to commemorate the pronunciamiento, a practice they adopted, albeit with serious misgivings, as their preferred means of effecting political change during this turbulent period.

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## Acknowledgments

In June 2007 I was the recipient of a major Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) research grant amounting to more than £610,000, which funded the three-year project on “The *Pronunciamento* in Independent Mexico, 1821–1876” (2007–2010). It paid for the salaries of two research fellows and a database developer and covered the cost of two PhD studentships. It also funded the research team’s travel expenses to and from Mexico, including the expenses that were incurred in the organization of three major conferences held at St. Andrews in June 2008, 2009, and 2010. This generous award allowed me to put together a vibrant research team focused on producing a major online relational database that includes transcriptions of over fifteen hundred pronunciamientos (see <http://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/pronunciamientos/>) and publishing four volumes (three edited and one monograph) on different aspects of this phenomenon. The first of these volumes came out in 2010, addressing the origins, nature, and dynamics of this practice. The second was published in 2012 and concentrated on who adopted this form of insurrectionary politics and why, noting how it evolved from 1821 to 1868.

Needless to say, I am extremely grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Without the AHRC’s funding, this extraordinary project would never have taken place. Thanks to

the AHRC the third of three planned international conferences was held in St. Andrews, 11–13 June 2010, bringing together the St. Andrews–based research team and a formidable group of international scholars. This book contains the findings of a selection of the papers that were presented. I would like to thank St. Joseph's University, the Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, the Instituto Mora, California State University at San Bernardino, and the Universities of Leeds and Warwick for the financial contributions they made toward the travel expenses of their respective speakers.

The conference went ahead (only after the delegates were allowed to watch Mexico play South Africa in the inaugural match of the 2010 World Cup) and was extremely lively, generating intense discussion. Thanks are due to the late Michael P. Costeloe, Paul Garner, Brian Hamnett, Francisco Parra, and Guy Thomson, all of whom kindly chaired the sessions and generously contributed their thoughts to the dialectics unleashed by the conference. Likewise I offer my sincere thanks to those speakers who, although not included in this volume, offered suggestive papers on different aspects of the memory, commemoration, and representation of the Mexican *pronunciamento*, in particular Germán Martínez Martínez and Natasha Picôt.

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## Introduction

### *The Damned and the Venerated: The Memory, Commemoration, and Representation of the Nineteenth-Century Mexican Pronunciamiento*

After watching *Memorias de un mexicano* (1950), the extraordinary documentary Carmen Toscano produced with the footage from her father's historical archive, one is left with the vivid impression that in Mexico the passing of time was punctuated by the regular eruption of revolutions and the authorities' obsession with constantly organizing fiestas to celebrate them: as if the Mexican calendar were made up of seasonal revolutions and fiestas.<sup>1</sup> Salvador Toscano's coverage of most, not to say all, of the key events that unfolded in Mexico between 1897 and 1924, paired with his regular filming of the annual celebrations of independence in the capital, provides an exceptional visual record of the first decades of the twentieth century, offering a narrative in which revolutions and fiestas followed one another with startling yet remarkable consistency.

In *Memorias de un mexicano* we actually see the 1904 parade that celebrated Porfirio Díaz's penultimate rise to the presidency, the celebrations of 16 September 1908, those of the centenary in September 1910, Francisco Madero's revolution of 20 November that year (following his fetid journey by train from Ciudad Juárez to Mexico City), and the celebrations that were held after his electoral victory and accession to the presidency. We witness Emiliano Zapata's 1911 uprising in Morelos, Pascual Orozco's

rebellion in Chihuahua, the battle of Bachimba, Félix Díaz's insurrection in Veracruz, and Madero's participation in the *fiestas patrias* of 1912. The *Decena Trágica* of February 1913 is followed by the 16 September celebrations of 1913 (now with Victoriano Huerta at the head of the government) with footage of a further military celebration to decorate Huerta's loyal officers, including General Aurelio Blanquet. Similarly, violent events such as the U.S. intervention in Veracruz, together with the mobilization of Francisco Villa's forces in the north and Zapata's in the south, are accompanied by footage of the short-lived president Francisco Carvajal hosting the ceremony of 18 July 1914 in the Hemiciclo Benito Juárez, of the parades that accompanied the Constitutionalist Army's entrance into Mexico City, of those that followed Villa and Zapata's arrival a few months later, and of the celebrations that marked Venustiano Carranza's presidential accession in 1917. After witnessing Amado Nervo's and Carranza's funerals, the film ends with the major celebrations of September 1920, now with Álvaro Obregón on the presidential balcony. The ostensibly cyclical pattern of fiestas and revolutions that features so prominently in the film serves as a powerful reminder of the extent to which the Mexicans' experience of their long nineteenth century, from 1810 to 1920, was characterized by political violence but also by civic fiestas, parades, and celebrations.

Mexico experienced two major revolutions in a period of just one hundred years, the 1810–21 War of Independence and the 1910–20 Revolution, with over fifteen hundred pronunciamientos launched in between, and has developed over the years a long-lasting tradition of celebrating and commemorating its insurrections, whether via the fiestas patrias of 15–16 September that commemorate Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla's 1810 *grito* (cry) of Dolores

or the processions and parades that annually mark Madero's revolutionary 1910 Plan of San Luis Potosí on 20 November.<sup>2</sup> Not only do the street names of many Mexican cities conjure up a mental geography of insurgency and revolution — 16 de Septiembre, 20 de Noviembre, Insurgentes, Revolución, Hidalgo, Allende, Madero — but the commitment to celebrating these events remains strong: in 2010 the Mexican government did not allow even worldwide economic crisis to stand in the way of spending 45 million U.S. dollars on the eight-hour-long celebratory bicentenary extravaganza of 15–16 September. Mexicans take their partying extremely seriously. As Octavio Paz noted in his famous *El laberinto de la soledad* (1950), “The lonely Mexican loves his fiestas and public gatherings. Any pretext is good to interrupt the passing of time and celebrate men and events with parties and ceremonies. We are a ritual people.”<sup>3</sup> The fact that Mexicans have acquired a reputation for hosting lively parties, spending whatever they have on fiestas and fireworks regardless of their dire straits, did not escape Aldous Huxley's attention in his 1934 travelogue of Guatemala and Mexico: “On nights of jollification, you may see, even in quite modest little towns, the most astonishing displays of pyrotechny. Indians are desperately poor, but they are always ready to spend their last centavo on something that goes off with a bang and a bright light.”<sup>4</sup>

Viewed from a British perspective where Oliver Cromwell's 1642–46 Glorious Revolution is neither celebrated nor remembered, the idea of a government investing large sums of money, even in times of economic austerity, to commemorate rebellions and violent acts of insubordination is certainly intriguing. What does a disposition to celebrate revolutionary activity tell us about a given national culture or imagined community? And what impact

does celebrating revolutionary activity on a yearly basis have? If revolutions are good (i.e., worthy of parades, fireworks, and jollities), how can an established government frown on anybody who takes up arms in the name of freedom? How can one condemn revolutionary activity (e.g., the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas of 1 January 1994), or deem it an aberration, when every year you parade, holiday, and proudly as well as patriotically celebrate revolutions from the past? Is the fact that Subcomandante Marcos named his Zapatista national liberating army after the commemorated Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata not indicative of the extent to which a tradition of celebrating revolutions and revolutionary heroes has given past Mexican revolutionary actions a noteworthy resonance in the Mexican national psyche?<sup>25</sup>

Just as it is extremely difficult for any current Mexican government seriously to consider privatizing *Petróleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX) when every year Mexicans commemorate the 1938 nationalization of the oil industry on 18 March, it is possible to suggest that a regular celebration of revolutionary endeavors may have fostered a revolutionary culture. And yet one could also argue that the celebrations, in institutionalizing these revolutions, have served to sanitize them, de-revolutionize them, disempower their original values. They have assisted with the legitimizing of those in power, those who do the celebrating, who pay for the fiesta and make everybody happy with *panem et circenses*, “bread and circuses for the people,” regardless of whether they actually believe in what the commemorated event or heroes actually stood for.

With these questions in mind, we endeavor in this volume to determine whether the constant celebration of the Revolution of Independence and the numerous pronunciamientos that ensued gave the nineteenth-century Mexicans’ “right to insurrection”

a certain respectability and legitimacy, transforming the actual threat of violence or revolutionary action into an acceptable, desirable, even admirable way of addressing issues of political injustice. Given the frequency with which Mexicans “pronounced,” it would certainly appear to be the case that the pronunciamiento became the way to do politics from 1821 until 1876. Given the regularity with which Mexicans celebrated these “pronouncements,” it also looks as though the pronunciamiento was a practice Mexicans deemed worthy of civic fiestas, which merited parades and public spectacles.

And yet the pronunciamiento, albeit enthusiastically celebrated, must not be mistaken for a full-scale revolution. Unlike the 1810 or 1910 revolutions, pronunciamientos did not involve mass participation and did not generally set out to overthrow the existing government and political system. They did not result in a dramatic change in the lives of great masses of people, nor did they bring about significant transformations in the organization and structure of Mexican society. Most pronunciamientos were, in fact, acts of insubordination staged to address very concrete grievances. As Miguel Alonso Baquer put it, rather than rebellions, they were “gestures of rebellion.”<sup>6</sup> They contained an expressed intention on the part of the “pronounced ones” of rebelling or disobeying, of withdrawing their support or ceasing to recognize the authority and/or legitimacy of a given local or national government. They did so, however, in the hope that the challenged authorities would bow down to their demands before any threatened acts of violence were actually committed. In other words, the aim of the great majority of these “gestures of rebellion” was to force the government to listen and negotiate with the *pronunciados*, not to overthrow it.

Although the *pronunciamiento* is still defined in most dictionaries and encyclopedias as a military uprising or coup, in reality it was not always a military action, and it was generally *not* concerned with overthrowing the government.<sup>7</sup> As can be gathered from Michael P. Costeloe's useful definition:

The *pronunciamiento* in early nineteenth century Mexico is difficult to define for practical purposes of analysis. Variable in size, objective, cause and effect, it became an established and recognized means of seeking change. Often but not always accompanied by the threatened use of military force, it was used by leading politicians of all parties to demand change at the national political level but it also provided the opportunity for ambitious military officers to achieve promotion, dissatisfied merchants to obtain the repeal of laws, the poor to augment their income with loot, and bandits to legitimize their trade.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, the *pronunciamiento*, with its distinctive and culturally unique expectations, formulistic and formulaic procedures, and easily recognizable generic-driven texts, was a nineteenth-century Hispano-Mexican extra-constitutional political practice that was used by soldiers and civilians to lobby forcefully, negotiate, or petition for political change, both at a national and at a local level.

For the sake of clarity it may be worthwhile to review how we came to regard the *pronunciamiento* in the first volume we dedicated to the study of this political phenomenon, *Forceful Negotiations: The Origins of the Pronunciamiento in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (2010). Regardless of the *pronunciamiento*'s evolution, it was a remarkably formulaic and ritualistic practice. In this sense it retained over time a number of characteristics that make possible

creating a taxonomy of the phenomenon, despite the difficulties of defining the pronunciamiento.

Given that there would have been a grievance shared or that could usefully be exploited by a number of officers and/or villagers, the initial stage of most pronunciamientos involved a conspiracy. The potential pronunciados sought to gain adherents and establish whether they would have sufficient support from key players in the community once their forceful protest was launched. During this preparation stage the pronunciados-to-be entered into so-called *compromisos* with potential backers. This involved promising rewards to officers, merchants, priests, etc., in exchange for their support. Once the aspiring pronunciados were persuaded that they could garner a meaningful following, a meeting was convened to discuss formally the grievance or matter at hand. In the original military-led pronunciamientos, this generally took place in the leading commander's quarters. Thereafter, and once the practice of the pronunciamiento was taken up by civilians, such a meeting went on to take place in the town council rooms (i.e., the *casas consistoriales*), the main square, the parish church, or even, in a few cases, in a particular individual's house. The holding of a supposedly spontaneous meeting in which grievances were openly discussed before the premeditated resolution of launching the pronunciamiento was taken became customary. At this point, a secretary was appointed who wrote down the minutes of the meeting, the *acta*, which would go on to outline the plan, petition, or *grito* that was formally and almost ritualistically *pronunciado*.

Most of the pronunciamiento texts thus began with a preamble explaining how it had come to pass that those concerned had been compelled to gather and discuss the stated grievances and how, in turn, they had resolved unanimously and as a corporate

body (specific garrison, *ayuntamiento*, etc.) to “pronounce.” In so doing they often claimed to represent an ignored or oppressed general or popular will. They outlined their demands in the petition that ensued and noted, in the more forceful cases, that they would unwillingly resort to violence if their grievances were not addressed. The pronunciamiento invariably carried the signatures of the pronunciados, who often claimed to represent the men under their orders (e.g., a specific artillery unit, all the sergeants of a given division). The text was then circulated as widely as possible, printed and distributed as a pamphlet or inserted and reproduced in the press. It was also read out to the community from where the pronunciamiento was launched, an event that could be celebrated (as the chapters in this book attest) with fireworks, tolling of church bells, music, and, in some instances a fiesta. If the pronunciamiento received a significant number of *pronunciamientos de adhesión*, and the pronunciados could hold the government to ransom by controlling a geopolitically important town, such as Veracruz, Guadalajara, or San Luis Potosí, its chances of success were indeed great.<sup>9</sup>

In Mexico the pronunciamiento texts developed into a genre in their own right. What is more, it is actually difficult to conceive of a pronunciamiento without a text. The importance of the text as a key element of the pronunciamiento cannot be overstated. The legalistic language employed is indicative in itself of how the pronunciamiento represented an alternative legality or bureaucracy that was on a par with the supposed constitutional order it was challenging.

It was also an appealing and addictive practice because it was ultimately a contained form of revolutionary action. The pronunciamiento was meant to be resolved without bloodshed. Its

dynamic was one based on threats and counter-threats, in which rebels and government officials waited to see how much support the original pronunciamiento received before deciding whether negotiation would be necessary or whether one side or the other would have no choice but to back down. As Josep Fontana has argued, the pronunciamiento opened up the possibility of effecting a contained or controlled revolutionary action, namely one that—although employing a threat of violence—forced change without actually unleashing a bloodbath in the manner of the French or Haitian revolutions: “It consecrated a new political formula which allowed the political and military ‘liberal’ minorities to carry out a controlled revolutionary process.”<sup>10</sup> The degeneration into violence or civil war was therefore an aberration.

It was an incredibly paradoxical practice. It was extra-constitutional, and yet it was regularly used to save the constitution from the abuses of those in power. It was unlawful, and yet its instigators often noted that they were taking up arms legitimately since the national will had been flagrantly ignored by the government. It was an act of insurrection, and yet it typically involved rigorously adhered-to bureaucratic procedures in which minutes of the initial revolutionary meeting were taken, and in which the pronunciadados’ demands were formulated in signed and counter-signed documents—the famous *actas* and *planes* (plans),—which were then circulated across the country in the hope that they would be supported by other garrisons and communities. It was illegal, and yet the language that was used in the pronunciamiento texts was tediously legalistic and formulaic. It was not part of the constitutional fabric of the republic, and yet national and state legislatures often ended up amending the law in response to pronunciamiento demands. At a time of constitutional crisis in which

Mexico's incipient institutions lacked authority, in many ways the pronunciamiento supplemented what was arguably a faulty constitutional process, in so doing correcting the constitution's own flaws and limitations. And yet the pronunciamiento was, by the same token, a force of chaos that prevented the constitution from being respected and from setting down long-lasting roots. It goes without saying that the pronunciamiento set a precedent for repeated unlawful political behavior and a context in which politics were decided, time and again, by pronunciamiento pressure rather than through the country's established constitutional institutions.

Therefore, it is fair to say that the pronunciamiento was a somewhat ambivalent phenomenon, one that the same individual could deplore and support, condemn yet practice. In this sense the 1831 *Catecismo de la Federación Mexicana* attributed to liberal thinker José María Luis Mora is quite representative. The answer to the question: "Have there been many pronunciamientos in the republic?" was: "Yes, much to its own misfortune, for apart from two or three at most, which after a thousand disasters have resulted in real and positive improvements, the rest, far from being useful, have caused it immense problems."<sup>11</sup> In other words, for Mora the pronunciamiento was a problematic practice that, while generally damaging, could nonetheless bring about "real and positive improvements." A temporarily reformed compulsive pronunciado such as José María Tornel would admit toward the end of his life, in 1853: "Now that we fix our sight on the road to perdition we have all followed; now that the patria harvests the sad fruits of our common errors, it is imperative that the hatreds and conflicts which were the cause of such harsh wrongs, disappear."<sup>12</sup> And yet he had not appeared to have such qualms when

he collaborated with the 1832 pronunciamiento cycle and organized both the 1834 Plan of Cuernavaca pronunciamiento constellation and the 1842 Plan of Huejotzingo series.<sup>13</sup>

While Mora and Tornel and most of their contemporaries (as may be seen in Melissa Boyd's chapter on the intelligentsia's representation of the phenomenon) were capable of criticizing although reluctantly accepting the potential benefits offered by the pronunciamiento, a handful of Mexican politicians took a less ambivalent stance on the subject. Serial pronunciado Antonio López de Santa Anna was one of these.<sup>14</sup> Writing in January 1832, accepting the invitation to lead the Plan of Veracruz, he saw the pronunciamiento as a "right given to us in our own constitution to request as citizens and as the first proclaimers of the nation's liberty, what we consider conducive to the patria's happiness and decorum; [for which reason we are] happier as a result than those who, subject to an arbitrary regime, must indispensably conform themselves with the worst abuses of power."<sup>15</sup> In contrast, the 1835 *voto particular* against abolishing the 1824 Constitution issued by liberal and civilian politician José Bernardo Couto responded to the wave of pronunciamientos that called for such a move. He noted that "there is not a more equivocal and false way of finding out what the popular will is than through petitions or revolts which we have been given to dress up with the soft surname of pronunciamientos. . . . [Pronunciamientos] undermine the bases of our representative system, and replace it with the most unstable and turbulent form of democracy. . . . [To follow] the theory of the general will by pronunciamiento is to canonize the essential principle of true anarchy."<sup>16</sup> Although Santa Anna and Couto provide us with two opposite views of the pronunciamiento, most nineteenth-century Mexicans tended to view the practice in more

ambivalent terms, being capable of lamenting their frequency while at the same time supporting a given insurrectionary wave.

Notwithstanding whether it was perceived as a necessary evil, a constitutional right, or a source of chronic instability, the pronunciamiento inspired numerous celebrations throughout the nineteenth century. To note just one example, from the perspective of the state legislature of Veracruz in the very particular context of 1829, Santa Anna's pronunciamiento of Perote of 16 September 1828 was recalled not just fondly but with festive awe. Santa Anna was declared "*benemérito del Estado* (hero of the state)" for having, in essence, refused to accept the results of the presidential elections and challenged the government with his troops. What is more, all the men who had accompanied him — "the chiefs and officers who loyal to their heroic pronunciamiento, accompanied the state hero, citizen and general, Antonio López de Santa Anna, in his last campaign" — were considered "worthy of the appreciation and consideration" of the state and, together with their soldiers, were awarded in a particularly elaborate ceremony a blue sash inscribed with the words: "The state of Veracruz, to proven patriotism."<sup>17</sup> As may be seen in Rosie Doyle's chapter on the fiestas that were staged in Guadalajara to celebrate the pronunciamientos of 1823 and 1832, and Pedro Santoni's study on the elaborate ceremonies that were organized after two of the numerous pronunciamientos that were launched during the Mexican-American War, regardless of the Mexicans' ambivalence toward the pronunciamiento, the Mexican authorities took great care, at both national and regional levels, in celebrating these acts of insurrection, time and again, when they were successful.

Damned or venerated, and at times damned *and* venerated, the pronunciado and the pronunciamiento have become, in a sense,

emblematic of nineteenth-century Mexico. Huxley, cited earlier, described the region as “a land of pronunciamientos.”<sup>18</sup> It is for this reason that it is important to study why they were damned and venerated, and by whom, and how this may have had a lasting impact on the way people have understood the pronunciamiento, then and now. As William Beezley has noted, “Independence celebrations during the nineteenth century reveal much about Mexican society, politics, and values—about what Mexicans thought Mexico was and what they wanted their country to become.”<sup>19</sup> The same can be said about the celebrations that accompanied so many pronunciamientos. Studying them tells us a great deal about Mexican society, politics, and values, what Mexicans thought their country was and what they wanted it to become.

So how were pronunciamientos celebrated, condemned, represented, remembered, commemorated, memorialized? In answering this question the contributors in this book force us to reflect on why this form of insurrectionary politics was so popular and widespread in nineteenth-century Mexico. Did the celebration of certain pronunciamientos and pronunciados give them a long-lasting heroic glow of legitimacy? Sacralize them? Make them worthy of emulation? What these essays show is that the celebration of the pronunciamiento certainly went a long way toward doing so but also that this came hand in hand with its condemnation. Pronunciamientos were celebrated, but they were also represented as a constant source of instability, lawlessness, routine violence, and chaos. What lasting impact would such a view have in the minds of nineteenth-century Mexicans and in the subsequent historiography?

Not surprisingly, depending on who was in power, certain pronunciados and pronunciamientos were celebrated some years and

condemned in others. Kerry McDonald's chapter on how San Luis Potosí's authorities celebrated the execution of two pronunciados, then venerated them as martyrs, only to forget them subsequently, highlights only too well how their damnation and veneration was tied to whether their political enemies or allies were in power at the time. Shara Ali's chapter on the condemnation, celebration, and eventual oblivion of Yucatecan pronunciado Santiago Imán similarly illustrates the extent to which those in power used fiestas to manipulate the political context to their advantage.

For all of this, the memory, commemoration, and representation of Mexico's pronunciados were equally characterized by ambivalence and duality. Our pronunciados, as a result, were viewed as troublemakers as well as defenders of the constitution, ambitious restless officers *and* representatives of the ignored will of the nation. It was not so much a case of "one person's freedom fighter is another person's terrorist" but rather that the same man could be seen as having done something noble while being ignoble, or of doing wrong with good intentions. Rafael del Riego may well have been the liberal hero who forced King Ferdinand VII to restore the 1812 Constitution with his 1820 pronunciamiento of Cabezas de San Juan; the authorities in Spain did not take long to ensure that the monarch was portrayed as the benevolent figure who had magnanimously and legitimately reinstated the Constitution by royal decree, wresting attention away from what Riego and his unlawful actions had achieved. Agustín de Iturbide's 1821 pronunciamiento resulted in the achievement of independence, but the fact that he went on to have himself crowned emperor and became associated with an eventually defeated conservative and Catholic Mexico led to his being forgotten in favor of the supposedly liberal and radical heroes who initiated the War of

Independence in 1810—Hidalgo and colleagues. Ignacio Comonfort was celebrated for his involvement in the pronunciamientos and revolution of Ayutla in 1854–55, but then condemned subsequently for backing the 17 December 1857 pronunciamiento of Tacubaya, which annulled the 1857 Constitution and resulted in the closure of Congress. Juan Bustamante was likewise praised for his role in local politics when Benito Juárez's government resided in San Luis Potosí in 1867, yet two years later Bustamante was condemned for pronouncing against the state authorities. Porfirio Díaz's liberation of Puebla on 2 April 1867 was celebrated every year until he was forced into exile by the 1910 Revolution. Thereafter, the date and his persona would cease to be the motive of any more patriotic fiestas. We are dealing with ambivalent revolutions and flawed heroes, and how these in turn were validated, re-created, experienced, and internalized through civic celebrations as well as depicted in contemporary speeches, historical accounts, and foreign travelogues.

In chapter 1, Rodrigo Moreno Gutiérrez analyzes the memory and representation of Rafael del Riego's pronunciamiento in Mexico during 1820–21. He examines how the news of the constitution's reestablishment was spread; how public writers interpreted it; and how these commentators projected, reconstructed, and commemorated that political-military history on the eve of Mexico's independence, considering the role the memory of that pronunciamiento played in Iturbide's own pronunciamiento of Iguala. We learn how early pronunciados were remembered, commemorated, and celebrated in the press, in songs and pamphlets, and how the representation of Riego's pronunciamiento—withstanding the crown's attempt to attribute the restoration of the 1812 charter to its own magnanimity—decisively undermined

the Ancien Regime's legitimacy and made way for other forms of political negotiation. Moreno thus eloquently illustrates the extent to which the memory and representation of Riego's successful pronunciamiento was instrumental in inspiring the subsequent waves of pronunciamientos in Mexico.

However, as becomes evident in chapter 2, while the pronunciamiento of Iguala, like that of Cabezas de San Juan, went on to be celebrated, commemorated, and duly venerated, the same cannot be said of its visible author and leader, Agustín de Iturbide. Richard Warren forces us to reflect on the importance of the question of selectivity and provides a fascinating study of how, in the case of a flawed hero like Iturbide, sanguinary royalist turned liberator-cum-emperor/tyrant, as the nineteenth century unfolded the establishment gradually found a way of erasing him from the picture, giving prominence to Miguel Hidalgo and the initiators of the 1810 independence movement, and celebrating the Plan of Iguala without mentioning the part Iturbide played in it, attributing the achievements of 1821 to "a general force" rather than a forceful general. Interestingly, Iturbide's unglamorous posthumous career was not due to the role he played in Iguala (the pronunciamiento itself remained worthy of praise and emulation) but to the way the actions he carried out after Independence were perceived as ignominious. That Iturbide became increasingly associated with a Catholic, conservative, monarchist, and arguably reactionary Mexico, and thus with no place in the pantheon of national liberal republican and revolutionary heroes, was in no small measure a consequence of the enduring counter-narrative that his grandson Agustín Yturbe formulated at the turn of the century.

In chapter 3 Rosie Doyle focuses on how pronunciamientos were

actually celebrated from the regional perspective of Jalisco. While the first two chapters show that the representation of Riego's pronunciamiento and the pronunciamiento of Iguala (without mention of Iturbide) glorified the practice, the third chapter explores the extent to which the fiestas organized to celebrate a successful pronunciamiento cycle (in this case the Casa Mata constellation of 1823 that resulted in Iturbide's abdication and the 1832 Veracruz corpus that eventually brought down Anastasio Bustamante's 1830–32 government) served to legitimize this form of insurrectionary politics in nineteenth-century Mexico. Doyle addresses questions such as why the *ayuntamientos* (city councils) in Jalisco chose to celebrate pronunciamientos, which were essentially extra-constitutional, subversive acts, with civic and religious celebrations; why they spent funds on these public events; and how this suited their political purposes. In analyzing the role that civic and religious fiestas played in legitimizing the pronunciamiento, informing the public of its achievements, making heroes of the military officers who launched it, and making the pronunciamiento a part of the lives of ordinary people, Doyle highlights both the importance fiestas were awarded at the time and the resonance they had in endowing the pronunciamiento with an unquestionable sense of legitimacy.

Chapter 4 adopts a similar approach from the perspective of San Luis Potosí, concentrating on the mixed fortunes pronunciados José Márquez and Víctor Gárate enjoyed after they were executed. Kerry McDonald thus explores how the pronunciados' bodies, as a site of political profit, were used by their contemporaries and to what extent this treatment, together with their participation in the pronunciamiento, influenced their reception within the traditional and current historiography. By focusing on the

memory and representation of the political dead in the form of executed local pronunciados, McDonald also inquires as to why these actors have been all but forgotten, or perhaps intentionally side-stepped, by the regional historiography, drawing conclusions about the often ambivalent nature of the historical selection process involved in any act of patriotic reconstruction or commemoration. In the case of McDonald's executed pronunciados we discover that they were celebrated both as criminals and as heroic martyrs at distinct moments in time, only to be largely forgotten, depending on who was in power and what political gains could be drawn from condemning them, venerating them, or deliberately forgetting them.

Shara Ali's chapter on how the dangerous and flawed hero Santiago Imán and his pronunciamiento of Valladolid were coopted by the Mérida elite to legitimize and popularize their separate, albeit allegedly supportive local-based coup of 18 February 1840, highlights only too well how the authorities could (and can) manipulate a potentially dangerous and damaging insurrectionary movement to suit their own ends by taking over the revolution in the first instance and then pacifying its more radical leaders (in this case Imán) by turning them into part of the establishment as official figures of veneration. Having achieved their aim of controlling the revolution and silencing Imán, the Yucatecan elites, as happened with Iguala, would move to commemorate the pronunciamiento of Valladolid without mentioning the role Imán played in it. They thus went on to commemorate the participation of the Maya in the pronunciamiento, in such a way as to be able to claim to represent the popular classes and, in so doing, paradoxically stifle any insurrectionary tendencies they may have had. The elite would thus simultaneously remember the

Imán pronunciamiento as having served the needs of the masses, to uphold its validity in memory, while actively disregarding the demands of the lower classes. There would also be a conscious elite attempt to forget Imán, whom they saw as an undeserving example of a pronunciamiento head. By implication Ali suggests that the Yucatecan elite understood the pronunciamiento as a controlled gentlemanly insurrectionary practice or game that was reserved exclusively for members of the elite and could not be led by someone belonging to the dangerous classes.

Pedro Santoni concentrates on the fiestas and ceremonies that were staged to celebrate two triumphant pronunciamientos that took place on the eve of and during the Mexican-American War. It is indeed extraordinary not only that Mexicans went on pronouncing even when the country was at war, but that they continued to celebrate their pronunciamientos, paying such attention to detail in every aspect of the corresponding fiesta, regardless of the string of defeats the Mexican Army suffered at the hands of the invading U.S. forces. Like Doyle, McDonald, and Ali, Santoni finds that those in power, in this case in 1845–47, moved with determined energy to legitimize their pronunciamientos through rituals and ceremonies of varying intricacy and sophistication to inform the population of the rebellions' objectives. However, Santoni finds that such festivities, described in chapter 6 in meticulous detail, could not overcome the manifold political, social, and economic problems that afflicted Mexico and argues that despite the fact that pronunciamientos left an indelible stamp in the mindset of nineteenth-century Mexicans, neither elaborate ritual and popular support nor soaring patriotic rhetoric managed to cement loyalty to the regimes that emerged from the revolts of San Luis Potosí (December 1845) and the Ciudadela (August 1846).

In chapter 7 Melissa Boyd analyzes the manner in which the pronunciamiento was understood and depicted in the writings of a representative sample of leading nineteenth-century Mexican politicians and intellectuals, including Luis Gongaza Cuevas, José María Luis Mora, Mariano Otero, Lorenzo de Zavala, Manuel Crescencio Rejón, Melchor Ocampo, Valentín Gómez Farías, Manuel Gómez Pedraza, José María Lafragua, and José María Gutiérrez de Estrada. On the one hand, what becomes evident is that although their opinions alternated between support, condemnation, and a mixed verdict, the importance they gave the practice was unanimous. By studying their analysis of and constant references to the pronunciamientos, Boyd enables us to appreciate the ambivalence most Mexican intellectuals felt toward these “gestures of rebellion.” Intellectuals discussed them in an attempt to obtain a better understanding of the events that had led to the revolts themselves and, in so doing, arrived in some cases at extremely perceptive conclusions on the nature of Mexico’s problems following independence and what needed to be done to overcome them. However, given that most of Boyd’s commentators were pronunciados at some point during their lives, their accounts also acted as a vehicle for justifying the actions in which the authors had actually taken part. They also wrote about pronunciamientos to keep them alive in the memory of the nation, so that Mexicans could learn from the past and avoid making the same mistakes in the future. Although most nineteenth-century politicians and leading intellectuals regretted the prevalence of the pronunciamiento syndrome, they endorsed those whose leaders or ideas they supported.

Given that most pronunciados participated in more than one pronunciamiento, their commemoration and historical memory

could change drastically depending on what was entailed in the most recent pronunciamiento in which they were involved. In chapter 6 Santoni quotes the preeminent nineteenth-century cartographer Antonio García Cubas as having once cynically remarked that Mexico's "perfectly established system of pronunciamientos" transformed men once praised as "saviors, regenerators, or liberators" into "arbitrary, illegal, and despotic" actors. Vividly illustrating this point is Antonia Pi-Suñer Llorens's study of the treatment that flawed hero Ignacio Comonfort, both venerated and damned, received in the liberal accounts of his day and in the subsequent historiography of the events in which he played a key role (namely, the 1854–55 Revolution of Ayutla, his 1855–58 term in office as Mexican president, his involvement in the pronunciamiento of 17 December 1857, and the French Intervention). She shows how Comonfort's support for Félix Zuloaga's pronunciamiento of Tacubaya had the effect of obliterating and annulling, to a degree, the memory of the courage and democratic values he stood for during the Revolution of Ayutla. As Pi-Suñer tells us, Comonfort's greatest mistake, which became the tragedy of his life, was to abandon the road of legality—of which he had been the staunchest supporter—by accepting the Plan of Tacubaya. That this was not unusual at the time, or that Benito Juárez and Porfirio Díaz later adopted emergency powers and dictatorial measures, respectively, turns out to be irrelevant; and it highlights how those who were responsible for writing Mexico's official history had the final say in the way Comonfort has come to be seen. Like the Iturbide of Warren's chapter 2, Comonfort figures here as another ambivalent and flawed pronunciado, venerated, condemned, and ultimately forgotten.

The Porfirio Díaz of Verónica Zárate Toscano's chapter 9 is one

who was also venerated and damned. Although he may not have been forgotten, the action of 2 April 1867, celebrated with insistence throughout the Porfiriato, certainly has been. Zárate Toscano, like Doyle, McDonald, Ali, and Santoni, provides us with a detailed overview of the manner in which 2 April was celebrated, commemorated, and memorialized between 1876 and 1910. Díaz, like Iturbide and Comonfort before him, undermined the celebratory memory of his early pronunciamientos by adopting dictatorial measures once in power. Specifically, Díaz made the mistake of overstaying in power. Given that his regime ended with a ten-year revolution, all that was remembered until very recently was the dictatorial actions of his final years in power.<sup>20</sup> Given that the celebration of 2 April was intimately associated with Díaz (unlike that of 27 September, celebrated without mention of Iturbide, or of 12 February, celebrated without invoking Imán), it ceased to be commemorated or to have any resonance once Díaz went into exile in 1911 — even though the event was in many senses far more meaningful in terms of its consequences than the Battle of 5 May 1862, which continues to be commemorated to this day.

In chapter 10, Flor de María Salazar Mendoza combines an analysis of the speeches that were given in San Luis Potosí during the fiestas patrias of September 1869 with a study of the troubled political career of *potosino* pronunciado Juan Bustamante. In so doing her essay builds on the work on patriotic and revolutionary fiestas presented here by Doyle, McDonald, Ali, Santoni, and Zárate Toscano, while engaging with the ambivalence with which Mexicans received and represented their flawed pronunciado heroes, as explored in the contributions by Moreno, Warren, Boyd, and Pi-Suñer. What becomes evident is the extent to which the commemoration of past insurrections could be used to address

strictly present grievances and issues. Salazar Mendoza's analysis of the civic speeches that were delivered on 15 and 16 September 1869 allows us to understand how the authors, who ironically had been vehement supporters of Juan Bustamante and Benito Juárez only a few years earlier, idealized the figure of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, to portray Bustamante as a "tyrant, antidemocrat and representative of disorder," depicting Bustamante's pronunciamiento as an undemocratic act of aggression against the institutional life of the state.

The final chapter analyzes how European and U.S. travelers represented the pronunciamiento in their nineteenth-century travelogues, letters, and dispatches, with all their prejudices and, in some cases, imperialist ambitions. To the Western gaze the pronunciamiento was a farcical practice, comical yet intensely irritating, that was ridiculed to prove that the Mexican people were incapable of governing themselves. There is little ambivalence in these accounts. Most foreigners who wrote down their observations on the pronunciamiento phenomenon regarded it as the source of the country's chronic instability. On the one hand, such a view would be used to justify the U.S. and French interventions and would nurture Britain's arguable informal imperial approach to Mexico and Latin America. And on the other hand, it would inform to a great extent the subsequent historiographic portrayal of nineteenth-century Mexico as an age of chaos, a view that only started to be redressed thirty years ago.

This book, like the two that preceded it (*Forceful Negotiations* in 2010 and *Malcontents, Rebels, and Pronunciados* in 2012), provides a revised understanding of the pronunciamiento. The contributors show that the celebration and representation of the pronunciamiento captured its contradictions and complexities. It was

both the reason why Mexico was backward *and* the tool Mexicans used to ensure that the constitution was not ignored, reflecting the genuine grievances of an exploited and disenfranchised people. It was a practice that became legitimized through its constant and enthusiastic celebration. It caused irreparable damage, and yet, to return to Mora's view, resulted in "real and positive improvements." Foreigners may not have grasped the subtler functions, dynamics, and nature of the pronunciamiento, dwelling instead on its potential for humor or to justify European/U.S. misgivings about Mexicans' ability to govern themselves; but there was definitely more to it than met their eyes.

The pronunciamiento was the desperate measure Mexicans adopted to confront desperate times. It was both good and bad. When it brought an end to a particular injustice and succeeded in addressing a given grievance, it was celebrated and commemorated. Its heroes were duly venerated. Because it prevented any government or constitutional system from settling long-lasting roots, however, it was a source of chronic turmoil and instability. Its heroes became tyrants, betrayed their followers, and joined pronunciamientos that overthrew the governments they had helped forge with earlier acts of insurrection, and the memory of their actions thus became selective and ambivalent. The pronunciamiento was an ambivalent revolution; its pronunciados were flawed heroes. As the essays in this volume show, nowhere was this more obvious than in the way pronunciamientos and pronunciados were celebrated, remembered, commemorated, and represented in the nineteenth century.

## Notes

1. *Memorias de un mexicano* has been re-released on DVD by the Fundación Carmen Toscano I.A.P. Worthy of note is that the Ingeniero Salvador Toscano was the grandfather of Verónica Zárate Toscano, author of chapter 9 of this volume.

2. For an excellent collection of essays on the yearly celebration of 16 September 1810 see Beezley and Lorey (eds.), *¡Viva México!* Also see Plasencia de la Parra, *Independencia y nacionalismo*.

3. Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad*, 72.

4. Huxley, *Beyond the Mexique Bay*, 233

5. I do not think Subcomandante Marcos's reference to a number of Mexican insurgents and revolutionaries from the past in his Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle of December 1993 (i.e., Miguel Hidalgo, José María Morelos, Vicente Guerrero, Francisco Villa, and Emiliano Zapata) was in any way gratuitous. The Declaración is reprinted in Rovira, *¡Zapata vive!*, 77–80.

6. Baquer, *El modelo español*, 40.

7. Typical definitions of *pronunciamiento* include: “Alzamiento militar contra el Gobierno, promovido por un jefe del Ejército u otro caudillo” (*Diccionario usual de la Real Academia Española*, <http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltGUI/BusUsual>); and “Sublevación militar cuyo objeto es la consecución del poder o, cuando menos, la presión que obligue a la sustitución de la política gubernamental. Lo que busca de inmediato es el apoyo castrense y por supuesto político, mediante una acción militar puntual normalmente de carácter incruento” (Enciclopedia Microsoft Encarta Online 2007, [http://es.encarta.msn.com/text\\_7651585458\\_\\_\\_0/Pronunciamiento.html](http://es.encarta.msn.com/text_7651585458___0/Pronunciamiento.html)).

8. Costeloe, “A Pronunciamiento in Nineteenth-Century Mexico,” 245.

9. For other accounts of the processes entailed in launching a *pronunciamiento* see Carr, *Spain 1808–1939*, 124; Vázquez, “Political Plans,” 21–23; Guerra, “El pronunciamiento en México,” 18; Vázquez, “El modelo de pronunciamiento mexicano,” 35.

10. Fontana, “Prólogo,” ix.

11. Quoted in Tanck de Estrada, “Los catecismos políticos,” 78.

12. Tornel y Mendivil, *Breve reseña histórica*, 210.

13. For Tornel see Fowler, *Tornel and Santa Anna*.

14. See Fowler, “Pronunciamientos of Antonio López de Santa Anna.”

15. Antonio López de Santa Anna, “Manifiesto del general Santa Anna para aceptar la jefatura del movimiento del Plan de Veracruz, en que lo justifica en el derecho constitucional de petición,” 7 January 1832, reproduced in Vázquez (ed.), *Planes en la nación mexicana: Libro dos*, 76.

16. Quoted in Acle Aguirre, “Ideas políticas de José Bernardo Couto y José Joaquín Pesado,” 40.

17. *Colección de decretos correspondiente al año de 1829*, 78–81.

18. Huxley, *Beyond the Mexique Bay*, 73.

19. Beezley, “New Celebrations,” 131.

20. Díaz benefited from a positive reevaluation in the 1990s. For a discussion of this view with its overtly neoliberal political overtones, see Paul Garner’s discussion of “neo-porfirismo” in his *Porfirio Díaz*, 12–15.