

cost of losing the shape of the forest, arguing that a new framework beyond the conventional narrative is needed to get the late colonial, insurgency, and early republican years into focus as a whole. It is a bit difficult to reconcile this *cri de coeur* with his apparent approval of the revisionist trend itself, one of whose major achievements has been precisely to begin dismantling the view of the Mexican independence struggle as a unified if not homogeneous movement, and in doing so to bring common people back into the picture. But one is prompted to pose the question: what if there was no general shape—no forest, in other words—and the essence of the extended insurgency was fragmentation itself? Instead of generating a new overall framework, then, the task would be to see how the many strains within the insurgency were articulated. Granados seems to lay out a vague program for this in stressing, in this chapter and elsewhere, the primary importance of what he calls “process,” which admittedly says much and little at the same time. “Process” in this sense would imply change over time, allowing for the central role of contingency (a change in leadership here, a lost or won battle there) and its effects on interacting groups, what Alan Knight has called “the logic of revolution.” In this view national independence and the role of various social groups in attaining it were not immanent in the movement from the first moment, but rather developed in an ad hoc fashion, but within certain social and political constraints that were dispositional rather than determinative. Process would thus be “located” conceptually along a diachronic, experiential axis. On the other hand fragmentation, as described by Granados in the revisionist historiography, has implied the disaggregation and analysis of the independence “movement” into its component parts, located along a synchronic/sociological axis. While these two axes are orthogonal to each other, Granados’s prescription for a more nuanced interpretation of the Mexican insurgency is to combine them, which will take some doing.

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Will Fowler, *Independent Mexico: The Pronunciamiento in the Age of Santa Anna, 1821–1858*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2016

Will Fowler’s *Independent Mexico: The Pronunciamiento in the Age of Santa Anna, 1821–1858*, published by Nebraska Press last year,¹ is the fourth book deriving from his research project (2007–2010): *The Pronunciamiento in Independent Mexico 1821–1876*. Other products of this project are: *Forceful Negotiations: The Origins of the Pronunciamiento in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); *Malcontents, Rebels, and Pronunciados: The Politics of Insurrection in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012); and *Celebrating Insurrection: The Commemoration and Representation of the Nineteenth-Century Mexican Pronunciamiento* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012). These three texts are edited volumes of collected essays in which a large number of historians have participated, including myself, Timothy E. Anna, Linda Arnold, Michael P. Costeloe, Erika Pani and Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, amongst many others. As part of this project, Fowler has also drawn up a searchable database of Mexican *pronunciamientos* issued between 1821 and 1871 complete with transcriptions of each document. This can be accessed via the University of St. Andrews’s webserver.²

In other words, Fowler has spent the better part of 10 years researching and writing about Mexican *pronunciamientos*.³ His efforts have greatly advanced the study of the *pronunciamiento* as a political phenomenon and provided new perspectives for our understanding of Mexico’s complex nineteenth

¹ Will Fowler, *Independent Mexico: The Pronunciamiento in the Age of Santa Anna, 1821–1858*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016.

² “The Pronunciamiento in Independent Mexico” <<http://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/pronunciamientos/>> [accessed 17 January 2017].

³ Also see: Will Fowler, “Entre la legalidad y la legitimidad: Elecciones, pronunciamientos y la voluntad general de la nación”, in José Antonio Aguilar Rivera (ed.), *Las elecciones y el gobierno representativo en México (1810–1910)*, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura

century. The subject of this review, *Independent Mexico: The Pronunciamiento in the Age of Santa Anna, 1821–1858*, brings together the divergent strands of the project in order to present a general analysis of the *pronunciamiento* in relation to the history of Independent Mexico. Here Fowler tries to explain “how and why” *pronunciamientos* became to be such a widespread political practise in nineteenth-century Mexico, via the study of what he describes as “the *pronunciamiento* constellations that impacted on national politics between 1821 and 1858”.⁴

According to the categories established by Fowler, *pronunciamiento* constellations were made up of a series of declarations which respond to an original or “start-up *pronunciamiento*.” They included the following types: “actas de adhesión” (which repeated the original’s stated objectives could often include additional clauses relating to local demands); counter-*pronunciamientos* or “*pronunciamientos de rechazo*” (which rejected the start-up’s petitions and offered a vote of confidence to the government being challenged); and “despronunciamientos”, or the public retraction of a previous *pronunciamiento*.⁵

Fowler demonstrates that the *pronunciamiento* took root in Mexico in the wake of Rafael Riego’s *pronunciamiento* against Fernando VII (1820) and Agustín de Iturbide’s Plan of Iguala (1821). The success of both these events provided an attractive model for the emerging political and military class to copy, giving rise to what he terms “mimetic insurrectionism” in the following decades. Emperor Agustín was crowned and later overthrown via a *pronunciamiento*, as were numerous presidents. Supporters of radical federalism in the states used *pronunciamientos* to pressure the second Constituent Congress to enact a Federal Constitution in 1824, while centralists organised the downfall of this very constitution in 1835 through much the same means. Initially a tool of the political classes, mimetic insurrectionism spread in the 1830s and 1840s to the subaltern population where it became “their preferred means of addressing local concerns and grievances”.⁶ It is Fowler’s premise that *pronunciamientos* were, therefore, an indispensable part of political life in Independent Mexico. Indeed, he argues that they became “the way of doing politics” between 1821 and 1858.⁷ *Pronunciamientos* were “accepted, used, and endorsed by everyone”,⁸ offering “the most effective way of bringing about political change”.⁹

Fowler also links the phenomenon of the *pronunciamiento* to the context of contested legitimacy in Mexican politics between 1821 and 1858. He argues that only “by understanding the transitory context of Mexico’s early national period and appreciating the extent to which no given set of laws or institutions enjoyed sufficient time to maintain their engendered or recently invented legitimacies, it is possible to see how the *pronunciamiento*, as a practice, became as much a curious constitutional stop-gap measure as a source of instability”.¹⁰ *Pronunciamientos* tended to defend a constitution (but not always the constitution in force, it has to be said), or protested what the *pronunciados* considered to be unconstitutional or illegitimate actions by governors and other political actors. They enacted regime change more effectively than elections; but in general, their leaders sought ratify their victories via a congressional decree. Fowler defines the *pronunciamiento* as inhabiting the no-man’s-land between constitutional order and outright rebellion: it was a “relatively peaceful insurrectionary practice – part lobbying, part intimidating, with its acts of disobedience, circulating of petitioning plans and reliance on waves of aggressive copycat statements of support purporting to represent the voice of the national or popular will”.¹¹

What brought about the end of the *pronunciamiento* as a political practice in Mexico, according to Fowler, was the polarisation of political life after the US invasion in 1847. At least at a national level, in the 1840s and 1850s *pronunciamientos* became less a means by which political actors engaged in

Económica/Consulta/Conacyt/IFE, 2010), pp. 95–120; and Will Fowler, “El pronunciamiento mexicano del siglo XIX. Hacia una nueva tipología”, *Estudios de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea de México*, vol. 38, 2010, pp. 5–34.

⁴ Fowler, *Independent Mexico...* op. cit. pp. 34–35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 11–14.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

"forceful negotiation", and transformed into naked power grabs akin to *coup d'états*. In this context, unsuccessful *pronunciados* could and would be shot, rather than be exiled. At a local level, the use of *pronunciamientos* by subaltern groups and indigenous rebels, also made the *pronunciamiento* synonymous with rebellion. As a result, after the War of the Reform, the *pronunciamiento* had been clearly defined as an unconstitutional, illegitimate form of action, thus leaving Mexicans to choose between engaging "in the political life of the republic by constitutional means or through outright rebellion" since.¹²

Independent Mexico: The Pronunciamiento in the Age of Santa Anna, 1821–1858, then, offers perhaps the most complete interpretation of the *pronunciamiento* in Mexican politics to date. Through Fowler's analysis of the different types of *pronunciamiento* and their multiples uses, it is possible to appreciate that this practise was not a static phenomenon, but evolved between 1820 and 1850 in a number of distinct ways. It is also possible to see that the *pronunciamiento* was not always used as a banner of revolt, but can better be understood as a means of pressuring authorities to act on certain matters. In that sense, the spread of the *pronunciamiento* in the 1830s is evidence of Mexican public participation in the political process. Thus, in many ways, non-violent *pronunciamientos* can be usefully compared to the British and US fashion for petitions which flourished from the eighteenth century onwards.

Even so, I think two of Fowler's hypothesis need to be questioned. The idea that *pronunciamientos* were "the [i.e. the only or best] way of doing politics" between 1821 and 1858 strikes me as difficult to sustain.¹³ There were many ways of "doing politics" in Mexico's early national period, most of them considerably less risky than launching a *pronunciamiento*. As the research project into electoral practices coordinated by Fausta Gantús and Alicia Salmerón shows,¹⁴ the electoral process provided ample opportunity for similar rounds of negotiations and public participation. Their books show that elections were not the sham that historiography has assumed thus far. Indirect elections created small electoral assemblies or juntas, first at a district level and later at state level, in which elected voters decided upon choices for elected positions. José María Luis Mora describes how this process was subject to outside pressures and tensions quite well in an essay published in *El Observador de la República Mexicana* in 1830.¹⁵ In fact, Fowler's 2010 essay on the relation between the *pronunciamiento* and elections recognises the utility of the electoral system in Mexico. In this text, he offers a much more nuanced argument than the one he presents in the book, maintaining that "el pronunciamiento mexicano del siglo XIX fue, en cierto sentido, una extensión del sistema electoral de la época".¹⁶

Secondly, I think the demise of the *pronunciamiento* cannot be explained purely with reference to the transformation of this practice from one of "forceful negotiation" to one of simple rebellion. The polarisation of politics which occurred after 1847 did not just impact the way *pronunciamientos* were organised and carried out. They also marked a clear rupture in the politics of contested legitimacy that, as Fowler so astutely notes, gave rise to the *pronunciamiento* in the first place. Before 1847, politicians contested the legitimacy or constitutionality of state actors but all parties were convinced of the legitimacy of the idea of liberal constitutionalism as the only way to build a stable nation. After 1847, conservative politicians began to actively challenge the idea of the legitimacy of the liberal constitutional project *itself*. This changed the dynamics of public debate, as Elías Palti has shown.¹⁷

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 245.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁴ Fausta Gantús and Alicia Salmerón (coords.), *Prensa y elecciones: Formas de hacer política en el México del siglo XIX*, México, Instituto Mora/CONACYT/IFE, 2014; Fausta Gantús (coord.), *Elecciones en el México del siglo XIX: Las fuentes*, México, Instituto Mora/CONACYT, 2015; Fausta Gantús, *Elecciones en el México del siglo XIX: las prácticas*, México, Instituto Mora/CONACYT/TEDF, 2016.

¹⁵ "Discurso sobre las elecciones directas", *El Observador de la República Mexicana*, segunda época, miércoles 4 de agosto de 1830, vol. III, no. 1, pp. 3–17. Also see, Catherine Andrews, "Las ideas de José María Luis Mora para la reforma de la Constitución Federal de 1824. Un análisis de los ensayos publicados en *El Observador de la República Mexicana* (1830)", en Rafael Estrada Michel y Mario Armando Téllez González (coords.), *José María Luis Mora. Un hombre de su tiempo*, México, INACIPE/UAM-Cuajimalpa, 2014, pp. 1–35.

¹⁶ Fowler, "Entre la legalidad y la legitimidad. . ." *op. cit.*, p. 100.

¹⁷ *La política del disenso: La 'polémica en torno al monarquismo' (México, 1848-1850) ... Y las aporías del liberalismo*, comp. and intro. by Elías José Palti, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998.

The civil wars of the Reform period marked a second rupture: with the Liberals' decisive win, the execution of Maximilian, Tomás Mejía and Miguel Miramón, there was no longer a contested legitimacy at all. After 1867, the Constitution of 1857 was the *only* arbiter of legitimacy permitted in the Republic. Moreover, it established the boundaries between the legitimate use of the right of petition and "forceful negotiation" in such a way as to definitively close the constitutional uncertainty in which the *pronunciamiento* culture had developed:

Art 8. Es inviolable el derecho de petición ejercido por escrito, *de una manera pacífica y respetuosa*; pero en materias políticas sólo pueden ejercerlo los ciudadanos de la República. A toda petición debe recaer un acuerdo escrito de la autoridad quien se haya dirigido, y ésta tiene obligación de hacer conocer el resultado al peticionario.

Art 9. A nadie se le puede coartar el derecho de asociarse o de reunirse pacíficamente con cualquier objeto lícito; pero solamente los ciudadanos de la República pueden hacerlo para tomar parte en los asuntos políticos del país. *Ninguna reunión armada tiene derecho de deliberar.*¹⁸

One of the reasons that *pronunciamientos* occupied a no-man's land between illegitimacy and legitimacy in the early national period was because the constitutions of 1824, 1836 and 1843 had been silent on the question of the "right of petition", widely believed to be a citizen's natural rights. The first government of Anastasio Bustamante (1830–32) attempted to legislate on this question with no success, for example.¹⁹

New constitutional clarity was the reason why the plans issued after 1867 could only ever be rebel manifestos: now they explicitly contravened the constitution. As Fowler says, the plans issued by Díaz in 1874, Madero in 1910 and Zapata in 1911 may have adopted the language of the *pronunciamiento*, but their express aim was to overthrow the regime in power rather than list grievances.

Both these quibbles strengthen rather than weaken the arguments Fowler upholds. His explanation for the rise and fall of the *pronunciamiento* offers a new window through which to study this period of Mexican history. Thus, *Independent Mexico: The Pronunciamiento in the Age of Santa Anna, 1821–1858*, will be indispensable to those historians looking to understand Mexico's political culture. It deserves a wide audience in Mexico than the current US version will allow, and I hope that a translation into Spanish will be forthcoming very soon.

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Ricardo Pérez Montfort (coord.), *La cultura* (vol. iv de la colección *México contemporáneo, 1808-2014*), México, El Colegio de México/Fondo de Cultura Económica/Fundación Mapfre, 2015. 305 p.

Se trata del volumen cuatro de la colección *México contemporáneo, 1808-2014* coordinada por Alicia Hernández Chávez. Esta serie consta de un total de cinco volúmenes enmarcados en un periodo que recorre desde la Guerra de Independencia –que dio paso a la existencia de México como Estado-nación moderno– hasta el tiempo presente. Un ambicioso, loable y necesario proyecto que busca presentar un panorama general sobre temas de economía, población, política, política internacional y cultura. Este último eje temático es el que se desarrolla en la obra aquí reseñada, y cuya coordinación estuvo

¹⁸ *Constitución de la República Mexicana de 1857*, <https://archivos.juridicas.unam.mx/www/legislacion-federal/historicos/1857.pdf> [accessed 18 January 2017]. My emphasis.

¹⁹ Catherine Andrews, "Las sociedades secretas; el sistema de elecciones; el abuso del derecho de petición y la licencia de la imprenta. La administración de Anastasio Bustamante y su actitud hacia los partidos y la oposición política (1830-1832)", en Alfredo Ávila y Alicia Salmerón (coords.), *Partidos, facciones y otras calamidades. Debates y propuestas acerca de los partidos políticos en México, siglo XIX*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica/Conaculta/UNAM, 2012, pp. 51–75.