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Review of Invading Mexico: America's Continental Dream and the Mexican War, 1846-1848. By Joseph Wheelan. (New York: Carrol and Graf Publishers, 2007. Pp. 490. Cast of Characters, prologue, epilogue, bibliography, notes, index, acknowledgments. ISBN-13: 978-0-786719-4. \$27.95)

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Invading Mexico: America's Continental Dream and the Mexican War, 1846-1848. By Joseph Wheelan. (New York: Carrol and Graf Publishers, 2007. Pp. 490. Cast of Characters, prologue, epilogue, bibliography, notes, index, acknowledgments. ISBN-13: 978-0-786719-4. \$27.95)

Substantial internal opposition to American wars has occurred in almost every case, from the Revolution (Tories) and the War of 1812 (Federalists) to Vietnam and Iraq. The war between the United States and Mexico was no exception, as exemplified by the protests of anti-slavery New England Whigs and their congressional representatives. Author Joseph Wheelan, a former Associated Press reporter and editor, demonstrates the manifold aspects of the anti-war movement in *Invading Mexico* but acknowledges that when the war concluded, “few believed that the war, now that it had ended well for the United States, had squandered lives and money. Most Americans believed Mexico’s subjugation and the acquisition of California and New Mexico well worth the price paid.”

Similarly, while acknowledging the weakness of President James K. Polk’s justification for declaring war on Mexico, as well as errors in judgment, Wheelan asserts that “In determinedly fulfilling the continental dream of an America stretching from ‘sea to shining sea,’ Polk is deservedly ranked in the top tier of presidents.” Clearly this is no revisionist screed designed to undermine the consensus perspective on the American past.

Instead, what *Invading Mexico* offers is a well-researched, thorough account of one of America’s “forgotten” wars. Relying on his journalistic experience, Wheelan has produced a stimulating narrative nearly free of the turgid prose often found lurking in the pages of academic histories. Nor is the book lacking in critical analysis, including those issues of historical interpretation. For example, Wheelan challenges the “cynical interpretation” of some historians that President Polk wanted the Mexican government to reject American proposals for negotiation prior to the war. Wheelan observes that Polk wrote to his brother at the time that “There will be no war with Mexico.” Wheelan also notes that while Polk was undoubtedly motivated by a desire to acquire California, his administration was “essentially passive” until American agents raised the possibility of acquisition by the British.

The narrative highlight of *Invading Mexico* is the description of the conduct of the war itself. Wheelan excels in his presentation of battlefield operations, and his assessment of the commanders is effective. His description of the operations of both armies in and around Monterrey in 1846 is particularly helpful in clarifying the action occurring at diverse locations. Wheelan lauds the improvisational skill of Gen. Zachary Taylor’s junior officers while noting that Mexican Gen. Pedro de Ampudia’s “irresolution neutralized his many advantages....”

The war which began with the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma

near Brownsville produced an unbroken string of American victories under Gen. Taylor but failed to provide a settlement satisfactory to Polk. The President then authorized a new invasion at Vera Cruz under Gen. Winfield Scott, who led his army to Mexico City and compelled the acceptance of a treaty based on Polk's objectives.

Although Wheelan provides ample evidence of the role politics played throughout the war, both in Washington and on the battlefield, the most depressing yet revealing episode occurred at the end of the war when America's triumphant generals turned on each other in an unsavory bout of recriminations. Gen. Scott, "who had prosecuted the most audacious military campaign since the Napoleonic Wars," was clearly the subject of political vindictiveness when he was removed from command and subjected to a military "Inquiry." The charges against Scott were soon dropped.

Joseph Wheelan has achieved for the U.S.-Mexico War what Stephen Ambrose and David McCullough accomplished for other American wars. Wheelan provides a readable story that holds the attention of the sophisticated reader. At the same time, he details multiple aspects of a war that would have an unimaginable impact on the future of the two nations involved.

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Life along the Border. By Jovita González. Edited, with an introduction by María Eugenia Cotera. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006. Pp. 131. Preface, introduction, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 1-58544-564-9. \$17.95)

Half a century before race, class, and gender became *de facto* analysis, and "transnational" preened itself into the hottest historical buzz word since "empire," Jovita González produced a Master's thesis refusing a folkloric version of Texas history that rumbles down a trail from East to West and drops surveying stakes on the banks of the Río Grande. Instead, she starts from the knowledge that a border has two sides, and it is on the border – on *both* sides of the border – that Texas history has been both formed and forgotten.

By reformulating the "rhetoric of dominance" that describes Texas as Anglos and the Alamo, González argues the centrality of the founding fathers, "who held grants from the Spanish crown" (preface 1), and their descendants, who grappled with the loss of that land. In doing so she not only questions narratives of Anglo border history and folklore finding fanfare in the 1930s heyday of J. Frank Dobie, Eugene Barker, and the Texas Folklore Society, but also addresses crucial themes engaging historians seventy years later: the place of race,

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