

nineteenth century (not before, as James emphasizes) helped build a firm legal tradition of the defense of constitutional rights. This finding helps readers understand why there was much consensus during the revolutionary years to keep the amparo when social rights were included in the new constitution of 1917.

The book then moves on to its main subject, tracing the changes brought by the Revolution of 1910, especially with regard to constitution articles 27 and 123. James sees more continuity than change in the judiciary interpretation of laws and in the resolution of amparo cases. Consistent with its position in the late nineteenth century, the Supreme Court remained an autonomous body, albeit with a younger and more radical membership. James shows that justices' loyalty to the legal tradition of the amparo suit actually made of the Supreme Court an obstacle to the implementation of revolutionary changes, especially with respect to agrarian matters. Landowners benefitted much from the amparo suit—to the point that it became necessary to reform certain laws in the 1930s that weakened the independence of the Supreme Court. As a result, the author suggests, the Supreme Court became more malleable, giving in to pressure from later twentieth-century executives as well as from those who represented the interests of the elites.

The author is at his best when he provides specific examples of amparo cases and how the justices discussed and resolved those cases. These examples help readers understand highly complex legal terminology and procedures. In that sense, this reader wishes the book had a glossary of legal terms and charts of how the Supreme Court was constituted over time. But these shortcomings should not detract from this well-researched monograph. This is a fine addition to the historiography of the Porfiriato and the Mexican Revolution.

University of North Texas
Denton, Texas
Sandra.MendiolaGarcia@unt.edu

SANDRA C. MENDIOLA GARCÍA

The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War. By Peter Guardino. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. Pp. 512. \$39.95 cloth.
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Scholars who study Mexico and Mexicans themselves would probably agree that the most important event in the history of the Mexican nation was its war with the United States. The war, like the US Civil War, was a consequence of slavery—in the Mexican case, its abolition. In 1829, Mexico's only afro-mestizo president, Vicente Guerrero, ended its citizens' legal rights to hold other people in bondage as property. When the Mexican government shifted from federalist to centralist in 1836, the Anglo settlers in Tejas-Coahuila revolted against the possibility that they could no longer hold others as slaves. Guerrero's decision would ultimately cost Mexico over one-half of the territory it

held at independence in 1821. Had the war not occurred, Mexico would have continued to claim Texas and California, two of the richest and most highly populated states in the United States.

Yet, relatively few books have appeared on this crucial subject, and almost none seek to cover both sides of the conflict. Fortunately, Peter Guardino accepted the challenge to study the war that changed history and has produced a superb account of events leading up to the war on both sides and to the war itself. Guardino is particularly suited to this task. He has two earlier books that examine rural people in Guerrero, *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of the National State, Guerrero, 1800–1850* (1996), and Oaxaca, *A Time of Liberty: Popular Politics and Culture in Oaxaca, 1750–1850* (2005), respectively. His work on these books gave him a sense of life in villages during that period. In writing the present book, Guardino seems to have read just about everything on the war, and he regales the reader with over 100 pages of endnotes, for a text of fewer than 400 pages. Readers, however, may wish that Harvard University Press had allowed for a bibliography instead of just letting the notes speak for themselves.

Guardino dispels many myths about the conflict, including two of the most prevalent. He disputes the idea that Mexico lost the war because its people were more attached to their '*patria chica*' than to the nation as a whole. In so doing, he reminds the reader that less than 13 years later, the United States was locked in a vicious war pitting region against region. Then too, he specifically refutes the notion that the Anglo was so far superior to the Mexican that the consequences of the conflict were inevitable. Instead, he points out the glaring disparities between the two countries. Obviously, it is impossible to quantify what it meant that the United States was a far wealthier nation than Mexico. Yet, that difference alone accounted for the invaders' better weaponry and ability to buy rations. Meanwhile, Mexicans lacked ammunition, cannons, and decent up-to-date rifles, and often fought hungry. The Mexican government's desperate financial situation was also at fault, as courageous generals and their men could not afford anything better.

Much too is made of the squabbles among the Mexican generals, as if all of their counterparts on the US side were fast friends. Guardino shows that Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga was the only general who put personal ambition above country when he marched a force of 12,000 men to Mexico City to take over the government instead of fighting the enemy. Then too, General Gabriel Valencia disobeyed his superior, Santa Anna, which cost the Mexicans a victory. And curiously, when Santa Anna desperately needed forces, Oaxacan governor Benito Juárez refused to send them. Santa Anna, in Guardino's hands, comes out far better than usual, as he organizes his men to fight and shows a willingness to use his own funds to support the troops. In addition, Guardino discusses each battle in such meticulous detail and riveting style that even audiences who hate reading about wars of any sort will find themselves captivated.

This is a wonderful book that deserves to be published in Spanish as soon as possible. Its fans can hardly wait.

Hispanic Division, Library of Congress
Washington, District of Columbia
bten@comcast.net

BARBARA A. TENENBAUM

Death in the City: Suicide and the Social Imaginary in Modern Mexico. By Kathryn A. Sloan.
Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017. Pp. 272. \$29.95 paper.
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Through an examination of suicide, Sloan explores early twentieth-century norms and fears in Mexico City. Other authors have written about death in Mexican culture, but few have written about self-murder. Using dozens of examples, Sloan counters popular tropes about Mexicans having a cavalier relationship with death. She argues that many people who killed themselves put considerable thought into how they constructed their deaths. She further argues that Mexican intellectuals worked within a worldview, shared by many of their counterparts in the industrializing West, that expressed concern about suicide, which they saw as a regretful byproduct of modernization.

There are additional arguments woven into the book's periodization. Sloan compares and contrasts the last decade of the Porfirian era (1900–10) with the years following the Mexican Revolution (1910–20). She concludes that there was considerable continuity, especially regarding an emphasis on modernization and the prominence of sociological approaches to understanding suicide. She also points out differences, mainly that the newspaper operations coming out of the revolution moved away from sensationalizing suicides on front pages and away from acting as amateur detective agencies. Nonetheless, journalists from both eras posited that Mexico was plagued by a "suicide fever," even though Revolution-era newspapers might downplay arguments about the fall of Western civilization.

The book has a thematic approach, but each chapter has its own additional arguments. Sloan explores statistics, opinions, and methods of suicide; the forensic gaze and body politics; media influence; medical approaches to mental health and the understanding of self-murder; public spaces; and, finally, mourning and bloodstains. She argues that there was some credence to certain claims about suicide: that economic difficulties following the revolution influenced suicides among men; that broken hearts led many people to suicide, especially women; and that suicide in Mexico was more prevalent among the youth. Sloan posits that bodies had significant power and meaning, even after death. And despite talk of objectivity, gender and class biases figured prominently in scientific, journalistic, and legal reports on suicide.