This book makes an important contribution to our understanding of the history of elections in Mexico. Some of the discussions – for example, on the exact number of stages (three or four?) in the indirect elections of the Cádiz era – can seem not merely technical but fussy. But the questions that recur throughout the collection should be of interest to all historians of the practice of politics in nineteenth-century Mexico. How were elections carried out? Who got to control the physical spaces where voting took place? Who voted and who got elected? What controversies arose over electoral practice, and who got to decide on those controversies? (The answer to that last question was itself sometimes controversial.)

Some of these questions have clearer answers than others. An 1894 voter list from the town of Campeche allows Fausta Gantús to provide information both on the occupations of registered voters and on the number of members of each occupational group who actually voted. We thus get a fascinating glimpse into the social composition of Porfirian voters. We learn, for example, that voting was particularly prevalent among *sastres* (tailors, 32.6 per cent), *empleados* (clerks, 26 per cent), and *plateros* (silversmiths, 25 per cent) and by no means uncommon among *jornaleros* (day workers, 15.8 per cent) and *labradores* (farmers, 15 per cent) (vol. 2: pp. 199–201, Anexo 2). On the basis of this information, Gantús argues for the significance of the participation 'of individuals from the popular classes and of certain groups from the middle classes' (vol. 2: p. 181) in local elections during the height of the Díaz regime.

What is harder to know is how independent, or self-directed, such popular voters ultimately were. Allegations of vote-buying or patrimonial voter mobilisation are documented throughout the two volumes. (During the Restored Republic and Porfiriato, there were sometimes reports of more brazen methods of fraud, such as the stuffing of ballot boxes and intimidation of electors.) Evaluating these complaints is a difficult task: the practices they denounced did not themselves leave a paper trail. The exclusive focus on electoral practice by most of the authors here becomes a problem; more attention to the social relations and political practices surrounding particular electoral contests might have allowed an empirically-informed assessment of whether voters were responding to pressure by social superiors or to their own perceived interests when casting their votes. Indeed, Irving Reynoso Jaime's unique attention to the social context of local elections – he documents the electoral dominance of *hacendados* in the district of Cuernavaca during the Cádiz and first federalist periods – makes his perhaps the strongest of the chapters included in these volumes.

Overall this is a valuable collection of case studies of elections that will be of interest to any scholar writing about the history of politics in nineteenth-century Mexico.

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John M. Belohlavek, *Patriots, Prostitutes, and Spies: Women and the Mexican–American War* (Charlottesville, VA, and London: University of Virginia Press, 2017), pp. ix + 306, £46.95, pb

In *Patriots, Prostitutes, and Spies*, John M. Belohlavek writes women into the history of the Mexican–American War 1846–8. Historians have been circling this topic for some time; Amy Kaplan, Amy G. Greenberg and others have made important contributions to our understanding of how both women and concepts of gender more broadly shaped US expansionism and overseas aggrandisement during the nineteenth

century. As Belohlavek points out, however, the existing literature on the Mexican–American War largely overlooks the place of women in the conflict. *Patriots, Prostitutes, and Spies* is therefore a much-needed overview of how women on both sides of the Rio Grande were not only affected by the war, but influenced its nature and outcome.

Each of the book's eight chapters examines a different way in which women experienced the Mexican–American War. Most did so from the home front. The US and Mexican governments relied on popular enthusiasm, rather than coercive legislation such as the draft, to sustain their respective war efforts. Women played a critical part in this endeavour. Chapter 1, for example, explores how US women sewed banners and flags and wrote patriotic literature during the conflict. Through these cultural materials they reinforced a connection between masculine duty and national devotion and emphasised the notion that honour redounded on the family and community of those men who enlisted in the US Army. Chapter 8 reveals that Mexican women similarly used poetry and verses to couple masculinity with nationalism, albeit in order to belittle those men who did not volunteer as effeminate and lacking in manly courage. In both countries, therefore, women drew on popular concepts of gender to create social climates which pressured men to take up arms to defend their country.

Not all women approved of the war. Belohlavek describes how some US women who were active in various reform organisations used their connections to host speaking tours and circulate petitions denouncing the conflict. These women were primarily concerned that warfare would inject a spirit of militarism into US society. Chapter 5 reveals that certain female journalists in the United States opposed the war on less moralistic grounds. Political insider Anne Royall used her journal the *Huntress* to condemn the warmongering Democrats and raise the political profile of future Whig presidential nominee General Zachary Taylor. Ardent expansionist Jane Storm, meanwhile, wrote articles for the *New York Sun* which took the Polk administration to task for the overly-aggressive and costly manner in which it conducted the war effort. All of these women pushed the boundaries of female propriety by using their unusually prominent public positions to criticise the government during wartime.

The remaining chapters trace the experiences of women who found themselves in the theatre of conflict. Chapter 2 examines the role of *soldaderas* in the Mexican Army. These women joined Mexican troops on their arduous marches and occasionally followed them onto the battlefield to provide essential services as cooks, laundresses and nurses. Chapter 6 describes the encounters which took place between US troops and the female inhabitants of the Mexican towns they occupied during the war. Belohlavek draws on the correspondence and memoirs of US soldiers to describe these interactions, which ranged from the hostile and violent to the romantic. He is careful to point out that even those troops who fancied themselves in love with a Mexican *señorita* usually broke off their engagements when the war ended, fearful of the scorn they would receive should they bring a dark-skinned bride back with them to the United States. US soldiers' prejudices against Mexicans were often challenged, but rarely entirely eroded by such encounters.

Relatively few US women participated in the Mexican–American War directly. There were, however, exceptions. A handful joined US troops as they marched along the Santa Fe Trail to take possession of the northern Mexican territories of New Mexico and California. Chapter 3 draws on these women's letters and diaries

to recreate the hardships they faced during their journeys. Chapter 4 similarly recounts the extraordinary feats of Sarah Bowman, one of the few female camp followers in the US Army, who gained a reputation for heroism for her efforts to feed and nurse soldiers on the battlefield. These women found that warfare brought both suffering and opportunities to assert their strength and independence.

This study has some shortcomings. Belohlavek covers a lot of terrain in his effort to trace the myriad of ways women on both sides of the Rio Grande participated in the Mexican–American War. This breadth of scope comes at the expense of deeper historiographical engagement. While Belohlavek references recent scholarship, he rarely questions the theories of other historians or offers fresh ones of his own. His contention that women have been largely absent from histories of the Mexican–American War is well made. However, Belohlavek misses an opportunity to show how addressing this oversight might help us think differently about broader topics such as race, gender, or foreign policy in either the United States or Mexico. While he makes a commendable effort to describe the experiences of women from across the social spectrum, moreover, Belohlavek's examinations of the lives of the white elite are the most detailed and extensive.

With this said, there is much of value in this book. Belohlavek's greatest strength is his ability to paint vivid portrayals of the social and cultural worlds which his subjects inhabited. In this sense, his study is a useful introduction to a range of subjects, from the history of the Mexican–American War to politics in the antebellum United States. While Belohlavek is clearly impressed by the bravery and fortitude of some of the women he analyses, he is not overly reverent and acknowledges both their achievements and weaknesses. Finally, his writing style is elegant, and the clarity and comprehensiveness of his book will make it an enjoyable read for newcomers to the subject and more experienced scholars alike.

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Amelia M. Kiddle, *Mexico's Relations with Latin America during the Cárdenas Era* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), pp. xvii + 307, £59.50, hb

'Sincere friendship and a profound interest in sharing the triumphs and concerns of friendly nations' is how Eduardo Hay – Mexico's foreign minister for most of the Cárdenas presidency – summarised the *modus operandi* of the government in external affairs. While Roosevelt had his Good Neighbour Policy, Cárdenas developed *la política del buen amigo*, an approach that was 'equal parts realism and idealism' (p. 17). This policy, argues Amelia Kiddle, had significant impact throughout the region; her argument therefore shifts the focus of 1930s diplomacy away from the traditional lens of the United States and its supposed interventionism–isolationism pendulum, and makes a compelling case for a genuinely inter-American prism.

The book opens with an account of the voyage of the *Durango*, a warship repurposed in 1940 to fight a different sort of battle: one of public relations. The vessel embarked on a 'three-month-long artistic, military, commercial, and athletic mission of goodwill' around Latin America. The beginning is, of course, the end, for the *Durango*'s trip came in the final year of the Cárdenas *sexenio*, and Kiddle then steps back to explain in rich detail how Mexico developed both the capacity