

The Texas Revolutionary Experience: A Political and Social History, 1835–1836. By PAUL D. LACK. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992. Maps. Tables. Notes. Index. xxv, 332 pp. Cloth. \$39.50.

In this study, Paul Lack deals in a quite untraditional way with a problem that has attracted the attention of U.S. and Mexican historians since the last century. He does not trace the growing conflict between the Mexican government and the English-speaking majority of the Texas population, as have most studies since the early 1820s. Instead, he focuses immediately on the situation in 1835 and 1836, by which time relations between a major portion of the inhabitants of this northern region of Mexico and the central government had reached a critical stage, and Mexican political leaders had concluded that the separation of Texas loomed as an imminent danger.

Lack believes that the English-speaking Texans were able to establish local self-help organizations, organized to reflect the ideas brought in by immigrants from the United States. However, as the author points out, these relatively isolated communities were divided by petty quarrels and rivalries at the very moment they came into conflict with the central authority. This threatened not only the goals of the proponents of a radical and conscious separatism, but also, ultimately, the continued existence of the Texas Anglo communities.

Thus at the beginning of this critical phase of Texas history, social chaos reigned among the Anglos. Some Texans adopted an antiwar stance, partly from opposition to the authorities, partly from concern over the eventual position of the slaves. The situation offered few prospects for forming a central governing body that could speak for the entire Anglo population on this part of the continent. Indeed, the only factor working in favor of Anglo unity was the irrational policy pursued by the Mexican government. When Santa Anna failed to exploit the Anglos' divisions to frustrate the pressure for separation, he resorted to intimidation and military action, threatening the Texans' lives and property. He thereby obliged the Anglos to overcome or at least temporarily bridge their differences. These, of course, resurfaced once Santa Anna suffered his decisive defeat and the Texas politicians confronted new conditions.

One possibility was the formation of a national state. Lack repeatedly points to this alternative without, however, considering whether the formative conditions actually existed. He adduces no evidence for the presence of nation-forming processes in Texas society, and he does not modify the traditional view of the Texans as generally favoring annexation to the United States. As for the views of the Spanish-speaking Texans, Lack follows the opinion of David J. Weber and Arnaldo De León that at least part of the Hispanic population supported the Anglos in their opposition to Santa Anna, although many later changed their position. Lack also deals briefly with the prospects for the slaves. He concludes that the changes of the 1830s took place so rapidly that the blacks could not seize the opportunity to break the old system, which in the following years was strengthened.

On the whole, this work represents a significant contribution, especially the chapters analyzing the changes of position by various groups of Texans during those two years. The passages dealing with trends that never became established in Texas society are suggestive, especially their consideration of the possibility of an independent state and the creation of a Texan nationality. This is a historical problem of general interest offering an opportunity for future study, and it is to his credit that Lack has posed the question, without, of course, being able to offer a complete answer.

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Nahuatl to Rayuela: The Latin American Collection at Texas. Edited by DAVE OLIPHANT. Austin: Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, 1992. Photographs. Plates. Maps. Notes. 155 pp. Paper. \$15.00.

In June 1991 I was privileged to hear Dr. Nettie Lee Benson, by then well advanced in age, welcome the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM) to the Benson Collection at the University of Texas. It was a remarkable moment, and it is a remarkable collection. This fascinating book not only pays tribute to the life's work of this extraordinary woman but also describes the immense variety of the resources in the Benson Collection.

The 11 essays here demonstrate clearly that the collection documents Latin American history, politics, and culture very broadly. The chapters range from a study of maps and census reports from New Spain and a rich description of the Nahuatl collection to an essay on the library's offerings for investigations into Mexican cultural life, and another on the work of Gabriela Mistral. Other excellent contributions describe the music collection, the materials available for the study of Chilean family history, the Taracena Flores collection of Guatemalan street literature, and the archives of personal papers within the Benson Collection that document the Mexican American experience. Still another chapter discusses a scholar's use of the manuscript of Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela*. The essays by Donald Gibbs and Sonia Merubia provide the more general background of how the collection was developed, describing not just strengths but also gaps, especially in the literary collections, and detailing how those gaps were redressed. The creativity of Dr. Benson's acquisition methods emerges clearly from these two chapters. The reader is quickly convinced that such imaginative approaches were critical to the building of this fine collection, which has supported the work of so many scholars and students.

The book is richly illustrated with maps, photographs, and color reproductions of manuscript leaves and book and journal covers, all of which further convey the variety within the collection. The volume will be of broad interest among Latin Americanists, because each essay is more than merely a description or a listing; each is a study in itself, of culture, history, and scholarship trends in many of the