Bernsen, James Aalan. *The Lost War for Texas: Mexican Rebels, American Burrites, and the Texas Revolution of 1811*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press. 1st ed. 464 pp. 12 b&w photos. Map. Appendix. Bib. Index. $75.00. 978-1-64843-173-9.

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James Aalan Bernsen argues in *The Lost War for Texas* that "the Texas Revolution of 1811 is the most important obscure event in North American history," with impacts that alter the way we should consider the Texas, American, and Mexican Revolutions. Given the book's impressive research, creative analytical framework, and flair for the dramatic, this reviewer is inclined to agree. At a minimum, The Lost War for Texas demands a more nuanced understanding of the aforementioned conflicts. At its fullest, the evidence Bernsen uncovers has potentially more profound consequences.

The author's intent is to tell the story of the Mexican Revolution in the province of Tejas while setting it within the broadest international context. As such, foundational underpinnings of the 1811 Texas Revolution are found in the 18th Century Bourbon Reforms of Spanish Mexico and the 1803 United States purchase of the Louisiana territory. The reaction of governments in Madrid, London, and Washington D.C. to the rebellion are tinctured by the chaos of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars. His perspective does not narrow when Bernsen examines the conflict's individual participants. Original genealogical research allows the author to capture their variety: well-heeled Brahmins from the blueblood streets of Boston, U.S.-born Indian agents of the Spanish crown headquartered in Nacogdoches, banditti occupying the swamps of the Sabine River basin, Creole Spanish and French New Orleanians seeking new markets for trade, American fur trappers and surveyors operating in Missouri and Colorado, Jacobin inspired Cubans, and monarchist Tejano reformers. Bernsen has compiled the most accurate and complete lists to date of the rebels, and Texas A&M University Press deserves credit for printing these as appendices.

The book is keen on placing native Tejanos at the center of the revolutionary struggle. Tejano subjects felt increasingly alienated from colonial authority, and when word of rebellion reached the province, it had no shortage of supporters. Future Tejano leader José Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara delivered revolutionary propaganda to Tejas only months after Father Hidalgo issued his *Grito*. In January 1811 a coalition of Tejanos and disaffected Spanish garrison soldiers disposed of the royal governor in San Antonio, taking control of the province. Though royalist authority eventually returned, the genie was out of the proverbial bottle. Tejano leaders continued to agitate for more political and economic autonomy; loyalty to colonial authorities remained nominal and tenuous. Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara's escape to the United States was only made possible with the help of a royalist calvary officer stationed in San Antonio, José Menchaca. Once across the border Gutierrez de Lara's revolutionary responsibilities took on a new turn: to recruit outside help, in the form of money, weapons, and fighters from the United States of America.

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Here Bernsen's examination of the U.S based filibusters is particularly instructive. They were heavily reliant on financing from merchants in New Orleans, Louisiana and Natchez, Mississippi, intent on breaking the Spanish mercantilist system. Many were recent European immigrants looking for personal wealth and fame. Others were the losers of political rivalries being played out between Democratic Republicans and Federalists back east. All of them had tepid nationalist attachments to the nascent government of the United States and indeed one of the book's central arguments is that the annexation of Tejas to the United States, should the rebels have succeeded, was not preordained. In fact, it was highly unlikely as many of the filibusters not only distrusted the government in Washington D.C. but intended to carry their revolutionary impulse south of the Rio Grande River into Central Mexico itself. In this respect, argues Bernsen, the hundreds of men who entered Tejas from the United States to usurp Spanish rule should be seen as heirs of the failed 1806 Aaron Burr conspiracy, which sought to separate a portion of the Louisiana territory from the United States.

The second half of the book is dedicated to chronicling the so-called Gutierrez-Magee Expedition of 1812-1813. The writing here is straightforward and brisk, encapsulating a lot of strategic and tactical detail. The author's military background in counterinsurgency gives him a unique vantagepoint from which to describe the campaign. Certain particular episodes he excels at recounting - the exhausting months long siege outside the Presidio of La Bahia at Goliad that took the life of Augustus Magee, and the controversial assassination of Spanish Royal governors José Maria Salcedo and Simon de Herrera, a decision that ultimately resulted in loss of Gutierrez de Lara's command. It is not lost on the reader that neither of the individuals whose namesake adorns the expedition were present at the army's decisive battle along the Medina River. That battle, fought just south of San Antonio in August, 1813, took place at a scale far surpassing any fought in 1836. While the battlefield's precise physical location to this day remains a mystery, its outcome was without question; a staggering defeat for the rebellion and the triumphant return of royalist authority to Tejas.

The final three chapters round out the aftermath of the failed revolt and set the stage for events to come. Bernsen's critical point made here is the first rebellion was so costly in terms of loss of property and population that Spanish colonial, and later Mexican republican authorities, felt they had no option but turn to the United States to help repopulate the territory. The author's goal is to have the reader see events in 1813 connect to those in 1836 and when in 1820, at the very end of the book, Moses Austin and his son Stephen Fuller step onto the stage one cannot help but think he has succeeded.

In the end, *The Lost War for Texas* is more than a regional history—it is a reframing of early nineteenth-century North America itself. Bernsen's work ensures that the Texas Revolution of 1811 will no longer be relegated to the margins but recognized as a pivotal chapter in the broader story of revolution and empire.