

argentino en un tema de debate central al que destinaron espacio considerable. Profundizar en el conocimiento de estas discusiones y de las propuestas para asemejar su democracia a la de los países más desarrollados es una tarea de indudable interés. Posiblemente sea el enfoque cultural privilegiado por la autora en su análisis lo que explica la falta de profundización en los aspectos políticos. Sin embargo, es su incursión en este terreno la que suscita interrogantes sobre los discursos e imágenes lanzados por un formador de opiniones tan influyente como *Crítica*.

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TIMOTHY J. HENDERSON: *The Worm in the Wheat: Rosalie Evans and the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley of Mexico, 1906-1927*. Duke University Press, 1998.

First published in 1926, *Rosalie Evans Letters from Mexico* presents the story of a North American woman's unsuccessful struggle to hold back the tide of the Mexican Revolution. Ranging from the profoundly intimate to the consciously public, Rosalie Evans' correspondence describes her efforts to protect her *hacienda*, San Pedro Coxtocán, from the designs of *agraristas* in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley. Thrust into the turmoil of a country at war with itself, she often appears to have been an innocent abroad. Although showing little awareness of political issues, her account reveals many of the strains within Mexican rural society at the beginning of the twentieth century. From her perspective, the *hacienda* offered security and sustenance to a Mexican peasantry that lacked the intelligence and ambition to better itself. She dismisses *agraristas* as unscrupulous radicals bent on self-enrichment at the expense of landowners like herself.

Rosalie Evans' story forms the framework of Timothy Henderson's analysis of the social, political and economic background within which this struggle took place. Henderson's success in the difficult task of blending micro-history with broader perspectives is in no small measure due to the meticulous, almost anthropological, attention he pays to life in the rural communities of Puebla and Tlaxcala. The everyday dilemmas and hardships faced by those living adjacent to the Hacienda San Pedro Coxtocán are vividly depicted, as are the complexities of their social and political position. From this, we receive confirmation that *zapatismo*, in common with most other strands of the revolutionary struggle, defies neat categorisation. Whereas *campesinos* in the *zapatista* heartland of rural Morelos may have shared common backgrounds and motives, their counterparts in Puebla-Tlaxcala were

different. Many were only part-time campesinos, with varying exposure to urban, industrial society. As such, their motives for joining the Revolution were not only differed from Emiliano Zapata, but often from each other.

One of the many rich aspects of Henderson's study is his portrayal of the uncertain relationship between *hacendados* and *campesinos* during a period when neither group was sure where it stood. Henderson skilfully extracts the broader implications behind the contradictory behaviour of campesinos who simultaneously doffed their hats to the local *hacendada* while stridently demanding their rights under new agrarian laws. Such examples portray the confusion of the Mexican peasantry: traditional social mores became fluid as they tried to adjust to the often ambivalent rhetoric emanating from federal and state authorities regarding their position in the new post-revolutionary order. Rosalie Evans views *campesino* belligerence as fomented by a few troublemakers, while the more familiar displays of servility confirm her belief in the *campesinos'* innate docility and devotion to their patron. Furthermore, she interprets the *agraristas'* reticence to attack her as cowardice, without considering that such restraint may have been due to prudence and a respect for her gender. Henderson convincingly argues that attacking a lone, foreign female would not only have been an affront to Mexican machismo, but might have provoked far-reaching diplomatic and political consequences. The restraint shown by agrarian leaders such as Manuel Montes and José María Sánchez perhaps deserved more credit than Rosalie Evans was prepared to extend.

One must have a certain sympathy for all those, from foreign diplomats to local *campesinos*, who tried to deal with Rosalie Evans, a woman who appeared to break all the rules. Viewed alternatively as a saint or a lunatic, even her most ardent enemies were forced to concede that Rosalie Evans "*tenía huevos*". Her courage earned her influential admirers within British and U.S. political and social circles, a situation that she did much to foster. Yet even they became frustrated as her obstinate and often tactless resolve threatened to undermine more fundamental economic and diplomatic objectives. Henderson shows that her obsession to defend her *hacienda* was sustained by the strong desire to honour the memory of her deceased husband, Harry, the only person who had enriched her adult life: Not uncommon for the time, Rosalie Evans believed in the communicative powers of the dead, and the moral courage she received from her husband's spirit, combined with a fateful disregard for her own life, gave her the strength, and perhaps recklessness, to continue her struggle. Enigmatic to the end, her final thoughts indicate a premonition of her impending, violent death in August 1924.

Rosalie Evans' struggle also had a more earthly motive: the *hacienda's*

commercial activities provided her only source of income. Henderson's discussion of the financial viability of the wheat-producing *haciendas* of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley contributes to the wider debate regarding the Mexican *hacienda* system. Simon Miller has convincingly argued that the Mexican *hacienda* should not automatically be seen as a dinosaur of feudalism that died due to its failure to adapt. Henderson agrees, suggesting that wheat producers in this region came to grief not from an unwillingness to modernise, but due to their inability to fund such development. Always a marginal cash crop, bad harvests had often led to the bankruptcy of older *hacendado* families long before the Revolution. They were replaced by those with sufficient capital to ride out the periodic financial storms, such as wealthy Spaniards from Puebla City or foreigners like the Evanses.

Henderson does not pretend to offer a comprehensive study of the agrarian struggle in Puebla/Tlaxcala. Nor is his focus specifically intended to discuss each of the many political issues of post-revolutionary Mexico. What he does provide is an excellent example of how biography can be used as a prism for shedding light on broader events. Puebla politics in the 1920s were beset with confusion and contradiction. Rosalie Evans' dealings with local and regional leaders, foreign diplomats, federal politicians and military officers afford a true sense of the tensions present within a political environment in which federal and state authorities were involved in a struggle for overall control.

Although containing the occasional factual error (Higinio Aguilar controlled the southern, not northern, sierra of Puebla, p. 45), this is a comprehensive, well-researched study. It would be petty to criticise those final sections of Henderson's book which revert to a narrative of the fate suffered by various figures whose paths crossed that of Rosalie Evans. While focus on Montes and Sánchez may be justified by what it reveals about Puebla politics, details on Evans' *aides-de-camp*, Strathaus and Camp, add nothing to the main plot. But this is a small price to pay for the greater prize: an elegantly written account which leaves a vivid impression of rural life in an important area of rural Mexico during the revolutionary period.

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