

cen además negar la verosimilitud de su análisis. Desde las primeras páginas del prefacio, cuando el autor afirma “the future of Latin America look[s] rather bleak” (p. xii), el lector tiene la sensación de que el libro quedó obsoleto recién salido de imprenta, sobre todo si uno tiene en cuenta que “while Europe and the United States have been mired in economic stagnation, Latin America has enjoyed a strong recovery, having for the most part sailed through the recession without lasting damage” (*The Economist*, August 13th 2011). No sólo el libro no explica lo que está ocurriendo, sino que además no resulta para nada claro que haya ocurrido lo que pretendía explicar.

Más convincente resulta su análisis de que la vuelta de un populismo anti-mercado ha supuesto un lastre para la economía venezolana. Pero tampoco queda claro por qué algunos países latinoamericanos han de caer en tales regímenes, lo cual es fundamental para su distanciamiento del camino trazado por Chile. Pero, sobre todo, no queda nada claro por qué, una vez que se hagan evidentes los incumplimientos en términos de progreso y desarrollo social de estos regímenes neopopulistas, las poblaciones no vayan a corregir el rumbo. De hecho, esta es la última gran incógnita que presenta el libro. En su exposición del caso chileno se muestra que este país también sufrió una crisis post-reforma. Pero los chilenos aprendieron de la lección y comenzaron a realizar reformas institucionales. ¿Por qué otros países no habrían de aprender igualmente? La explicación no puede ser institucional, pues las buenas instituciones no pueden ser obviamente la causa de las reformas institucionales.

El libro de Edwards resulta, pues, decepcionante para el lector que busque algo más que una mera evaluación de qué país latinoamericano ha sido una “bright star” en estos últimos 20 años, lo que parece al final ser el verdadero objetivo del autor. Tiene una tesis –la importancia de las instituciones–, que no es novedosa, que le lleva a realizar una predicción que parece quedar desmentida al poco de salir impreso el libro, y que además, en el caso de que hubiese acertado, deja sin explicar por qué el resto de países latinoamericanos no habrían de implementar tales reformas al igual que Chile.

Javier Astudillo

Universitat Pompeu Fabra

ENRIQUE MAYER: *Ugly Stories of the Peruvian Agrarian Reform*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.

This is a fascinating and unusual book. It is a reflection on one of the most significant agrarian reforms of Latin America. While perhaps not comparable to the agrarian reforms of the Mexican and Cuban revolutions the Peruvian agrar-

ian reform undoubtedly drastically transformed the country's rural society and economy. The book is unusual in several ways. While it is a scholarly book it reads like a novel or even a theatre play. At the beginning of each chapter there is a cast of characters mentioned in order of appearance. On average each chapter has a cast of about nine persons, ranging from three to as many as 14, almost all of whom were interviewed by the author. It is a drama in which people from different backgrounds who were closely involved with the agrarian reform have a voice. They are able to express their experiences and views on this process. Meyer skilfully crafts their accounts into his analysis. Almost all interviews took place in 1994 and 1996 at a time when it was beginning to be possible to do research again in the countryside after the violent period of the 1980s and early 1990s which had been unleashed with devastating ferocity by the Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*) insurgency.

Reading the book feels at times like seeing a film as the reader gets drawn into the action, especially as the text is also illustrated with many photographs. The cast changes from chapter to chapter but generally includes expropriated landlords, smallholders, peasants and rural workers, anthropologists and other scientists and leaders of peasant unions, indigenous communities and expropriated estates. These informants live in different parts of the country but often near the locality where some of the major events discussed in the book unfolded, on the coast as well as in the highlands. There are some women's voices but most are from men. The voices of public employees in the agrarian reform bureaucracy are also underrepresented while the voice of a fellow anthropologist figures more prominently. But the key point is that this is, to my knowledge, the only book so far in which the voices of such a variety of persons who experienced the events of the agrarian reform at close hand are placed at centre stage. As a result there are many revealing insights which further demonstrate that historical processes are far more complex than is often assumed. Social processes often take unpredictable and unexpected turns. This is humbling stuff for social scientists, especially for those who wish to influence social transformations and who think that they can predict future events.

The author displays an extraordinary command of the relevant studies on the country. This allows him to expertly weave these voices and memories into the wider canvas of the social and political transformations of Peru thereby providing a deeper meaning to the stories of his informants. Meyer, who is a Peruvian anthropologist but who has been living in the USA for many decades, where he is a professor at Yale University, has an intimate knowledge of most of the events he discusses as he lived in Peru during some of the crucial years of the reform process. His Peruvian background also greatly facilitated his search and access to key informants. Being an anthropologist probably helped him also

in his task of interviewing people and his inquisitive mind managed to extract from them extremely rich, revealing and vivid accounts. While having empathy with the persons he interviews he maintains at the same time his distance which is derived from his critical and independent mind as he is not afraid to ask the awkward questions. It is a tribute to his personality and research skills that most informants spoke so openly and candidly to him given the traumatic events of Shining Path's recent violence.

While I unashamedly praise this book, I never liked its title. Although many of the events discussed are indeed 'ugly', as well as painful, sobering and sad, there are others which are encouraging and positive. For example, in one of the chapters Mayer analyses the emblematic Tupac Amaru II Cooperative, which resulted from expropriating more than 65 estates with about 38,000 hectares and five thousand families on the high plateau of the Pampa de Anta in the Cusco region. The local population referred to it as the 'Old Donkey Cooperative,' as it had become a white elephant. This cooperative was a clear example of the dogmatic belief of policy makers in economies of large scale, hence the bigger the enterprise the better. It was a typical case of attempts at modernization from above. Instead of the promised participation of cooperative members it became an example of centralization of power and reinforcement of state control. After a protracted struggle over several years and many land occupations by the surrounding indigenous communities, the cooperative was dismembered and the land redistributed to the peasantry. Furthermore, the collapse of the 'Old Donkey Cooperative' resulted in "the hacienda-less Pampa de Anta [which] today is a prosperous agricultural region of smallholders and communities" (p. 265). While the process of gaining citizenship and land was often ugly, the underlying message of the book is hopeful. Although the modernization project of General Velasco's agrarian reform did not envisage the radical politicisation of the countryside and the redistribution of land to the peasantry, in the end it opened the way for the peasantry, through their struggles, to gain citizenship rights, which had been denied for centuries, as well as ownership over the land which landlords had taken from their ancestors.

Underlying this book about the process of agrarian reform in Peru is a very powerful and positive message. After centuries of oppression and domination, the indigenous peoples have been able to free themselves from landlordism. Thus this book is much more than a collection of 'ugly stories'. In two or more instances Mayer speaks of 'the good, the bad and the ugly' (see pages 20 and 241). Why did he not give this title to the book, i.e. *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of the Peruvian Agrarian Reform*? Whatever the title, this book captures extremely well a crucial phase in the history of the peasantry's fate in Peru. Today the peasantry are facing new processes of economic and social differentiation

and land concentration as well as the challenges of neoliberal globalisation and transnational capital which often have negative consequences for their wellbeing. But this is a topic for another book.

It is also a pioneering book for its style and in the way it integrates structure and agency in the analysis of processes of social change. Readers can learn many lessons from this book about social theory, methodology and how best to deepen our understanding of processes of social transformation. In short, this book makes a major contribution not only to Peruvian studies but more generally also to development studies, anthropological studies and peasant studies.

Cristóbal Kay

Saint Mary University

ROBERT L. SMALE: *I Sweat the Flavor of Tin: Labor Activism in Early Twentieth-Century Bolivia*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010.

With social movements making the running in Bolivian politics in recent years, it is hardly surprising that there has been something of an explosion in the study of labour politics – past and present. Robert Smale's book is a valuable contribution to the writing on labour history in Bolivia, specifically on the early development of mining unions. Much of the literature on this topic refers to the later period – the 1940s and (in particular) the 1950s when the Bolivian miners played such a conspicuous role in the making of the 'National Revolution' of 1952. Less has been written, especially in English, on the formative period of union development in the 1920s.

The focus of this book is on the so-called 'massacre' of Uncía in June 1923, when troops from the Bolivian army turned their guns on striking mineworkers in this small town of northern Potosí. Although the death toll was relatively modest – some six people were killed all-in-all – the conflict was a precursor to more bloody confrontations later on, the Catavi massacre in 1942 when 35 people were killed, and of course the San Juan massacre in 1967. All three incidents took place in the same area of the country, the key mining district of Llallagua-Siglo XX where Bolivia's most important tin mines were located.

Smale sees the Uncía massacre as a pivotal point, marking an end to a period of paternalism in the relations between capital and labour and the beginning of a period of outright confrontation, with the development of increasingly class-conscious syndicalism on the one hand and a more capitalistic mining enterprise on the other. Indeed, the book provides a much broader time horizon than just the politics of industrial relations of the 1920s would suggest. The first chapter, for instance, charts the development of mining in Bolivia from the time of the