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## RESEÑAS DE LIBROS / BOOK REVIEWS

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PAUL K. EISS: *In the Name of El Pueblo: Place, Community, and the Politics of History in Yucatán*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.

The fulcrum of Paul Eiss' provocative volume—and the concept that facilitates his interwoven understanding of community, popular politics, state formation, indigenous identity and memory—is his interrogation of the term “el pueblo.” Previously scholars across a range of disciplines have privileged one or another of its connotations, emphasizing either a particular village or place; *or* focusing more abstractly on the notion of local or broader community; *or* equating the term with popular politics (as in, most famously, the slogan “el pueblo unido jamás será vencido!”). Eiss uniquely establishes how these diverse meanings are not easily separated—and may be invoked simultaneously. By studying communalism in a particular Yucatecan micro-region—Hunucmá—over a *longue durée*, he shows that “el pueblo” is more than just place, or people, or political abstraction. This multivalent concept and the language that surrounds it, moreover, is internally contested and powerfully shaped by conflicts with “outsiders”—whether powerful landowners and more modest *rancheros*, state officials and police, or campesinos from other villages. Thus, “el pueblo” is embedded in social fields shaped by the capital and the state. While “el pueblo” is a concept that unites particular populations and communities, Eiss also shows how it mediates and becomes an object of discord among social classes, ethnic groups, and political entities.

*In the Name of El Pueblo* is a challenging and ambitious book. Daunting in its chronological scope, which encompasses several centuries of local history, and in the breadth of its ethnographic and archival research, it is also distinguished by an effectively crafted and often haunting narrative. Particularly intriguing in this latter regard is the book's evocative treatment of revolutionary violence and some grisly rituals of insurgency. Occasionally insurgents participated in what Eiss refers to as “vampiric slayings as sacred acts,” with *Hunucmense* rebels sipping the blood of cruel and haughty hacienda overseers. These accounts are not rendered gratuitously or sensationally, but are rather embedded in a careful cultural analysis of the performativity of violence and how violent partisan politics affected shifts in popular memory and understandings of “el pueblo.”

In the same section of the book, and based on extensive participant observation, Eiss evokes the restless spirits that come out at night and haunt the wells containing the bones of revolutionary victims in the still remote, present-day *Hunucmá* woodlands. These spirits whistle at and chase away any who would disturb their resting places. By day, however, *Hunucmá*'s parched deer hunters are obliged to drink from these infernal wells to slake their thirst: "What can you do," Eiss observes: "the sun is hot, and water scarce. You must drink." Combining the intimate sense of place that distinguished the work of Mexico's celebrated micro-historian Luis González with 'magically real' prose touches reminiscent of Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez, Eiss has produced a study that is both meticulously researched and terribly engrossing.

At the same time, he makes significant analytical and conceptual contributions to both Yucatecan and Latin American studies, wedding the disciplines of history and anthropology in a manner that enriches them both. Like other recent *yucatecólogos* (e.g., Ben Fallaw, Terry Rugeley, and Stephanie Smith), Eiss inquires into how popular and elite actors fashioned political projects, and how their religious, ethnic, communal, and gender identities were shaped within broader scenarios of state and nation formation. His book sets a benchmark in fleshing out grassroots politics, and languages of meaning and place, which turn on finer understandings of the local community, political imagination, and historical memory. In the process we gain insight into the emergence of newer understandings of rights, power and hegemony; identity and subject position; and forms of infrapolitics, resistance, and the negotiation of power.

Few younger scholars have the temerity to bring together critical problems that have rarely been viewed within the same conceptual frame—let alone examine them over several centuries and across two disciplines. I would place Eiss on an eclectic list of innovative practitioners who have worked at the confluence of ethnography and social/cultural history—a list that would include Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Florencia Mallon, Daniel Nugent, Patricia Pessar, and Robin Derby. The example I cited earlier, about restless spirits and cadaver-filled wells, which I raised to evoke the narrative appeal of Eiss's book, also suggests something of how his intellectual project proceeds creatively, suspended between the archive and the field. Thus, we get a clear sense of how the archived past jarringly forces itself into his perceptions of the landscape and of those who inhabited it, then and now. And more than any of the more senior historians and anthropologists I've just alluded to, Eiss's attempts to make sense of "el pueblo" and the accounts it has elicited entails interrogation of a particularly diverse set of "documents" and "texts." These include executive correspondence and court records; maps, communal land titles and petitions against land seizures; inscribed guns and swords left behind by insurgents; theatrical performances, religious festivals,

and communal hunting parties; popular tales about the Virgin's miracles; and piles of bleached bones.

Ultimately, this diverse repertoire enables Eiss to make one of his most important interventions—the elaboration of an “ethnography of history.” Thus, he demonstrates that, even in the absence of a collective memory or shared history of Hunucmá, there are patterned aspects of its communal experience that are given narrative form, that are sedimented in the form of allegory into coherent and mutually intelligible ways of relating el pueblo's multiple pasts.

This is a volume that makes demands on its readers and some may find the juxtaposition of chronological and thematic sections a bit jarring. But a careful reading pays rich dividends.

**Gilbert M. Joseph**

*Yale University*

MAGALI M. CARRERA: *Traveling from New Spain to Mexico: Mapping Practices of Nineteenth-Century Mexico*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011.

In an 1835 publication, Mexican statesman and historian Carlos María de Bustamante asked three critical questions of his still formative nation, floundering in the aftermath of Spanish colonization: “¿Quienes somos? ¿de donde venimos? ¿para donde caminamos?” In her important contribution to both cartographic scholarship and to the discipline of art history, Magali Carrera finds the most significant answers to these ponderous queries in the form of the 1885 *Atlas pintoresco é histórico de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos* by Antonio García Cubas, a multi-talented governmental agent in the Ministry of Development. As Carrera demonstrates in her complex and engaging book, García Cubas's polished pictorial album—whose pages framed maps of the nation with lithographic views of its human and cultural components—did not materialize in a vacuum but rather drew from a long and fascinating history of image production related to the description and identification of the place ultimately known as the United States of Mexico.

Carrera's rich arc of art history starts in the sixteenth century, when Europeans began to use maps and other imagery to make visible for themselves a profile of the broader American hemisphere: this included atlases with depictions of a personified America as semi-naked and otherwise barbarous, as well as the documentation of native flora and fauna portrayed as alternately marvelous and degenerate. Thus also began the cartographic and visual construction of what