Critique Of Life In Mexico Essay, Research Paper

In her many letters, and through her journals, Fanny Calderon de la Barca has left us a very informative eyewitness account of nineteenth century Mexico. Although these writings can be very useful in studying this period of time, it is important to note some of the factors that may have affected what she wrote. Fanny Calderon de la Barca’s own social identity was one of the factors that had the most profound impact on her writings and observations. It is because of this social identity that her writings can be used advantageously as a source for social history?However, it is the same social identity that will help alter and be disadvantageous to using her work as a source for social history. Through examples of her writing this paper will argue these merits and show how this work can and can not be used as a source for social history.

It is important to understand Fanny de la Barca’s social identity, in order to help clarify the pros and con’s of her work. She was the fifth child of ten born. Her father was well to do landowner, as well as a legal writer in Scotland. Her mother was related to the Earl of Buchan, in addition to other noble Scottish families (pg.5). She was very well educated as a child. She did see and face some adversity growing up. This adversity and experiences help to shape her social identity, and her as a person. Her family went bankrupt, they were forced to move, soon after her father passed away. Her family moved to Boston where the remaining family members, her included, started a school. The school was temporarily successful and then closed due to a mishap. The family then moved yet again to Staten Island. Her childhood was filled with ups and downs. Throughout it all she maintained a positive attitude and grew as a result. It is obvious that losing a loved, especially one as close as a parent will have a profound impact on a person. Seeing her family go bankrupt and having to move many times has showed Fanny that anything can happen at anytime, even if your are financially secure. Experiencing these ups and downs in her family life helped to open her eyes to the trials and tribulations of others. This is apparent in her writing. She was able to understand better and sympathize with the people she would come in contact with. The moving around probably made her later travelling life much easier to become accustomed to. She never really settled anyplace for an extended period of time.

Although Fanny was an outside observer, she was able to work objectively on the many things she saw and people she met. However, because of the time period she some times couldn’t write exactly what she wanted to, especially when it came to certain government issues. Due to her husband’s respected position in society she was able to meet many important people, generals and leaders. They were received and treated with respect just about everywhere. Sometimes even with a twenty-one gun salute, like the one from the Jason. She was able to make observations of what she saw as they traveled from place to place. This treatment had its own impact on her writing. Although she noted some of the negative things that she saw, such as the smoke blackened buildings on the way to Vera Cruz, etc., she and her husband almost always stayed in a nice and comfortable place or house. This kept her from witnessing and experiencing some of the problems firsthand. Also a lot of the information she gathered was from generals and governors, people such as Santa Anna. These were not true firsthand accounts from peasants and other lower class families. For this reason her information may have been biased.

She was really analyzing the opinions of higher ups, and may have received tainted information, or limited access, in certain situations. An example would have been Mexico’s breaking from Spain, the revolution and how it happened. Her own childhood experiences may have helped her in using her own insight on certain topics. This helped her form opinions where she may have been sheltered from certain information. This also could have adversely biased her writings. It is important to consider that these are Fanny’s observations and opinions, and are affected by her, and the experiences in her life.

It is my opinion that although she had seen and faced some adversity in life, Fanny basically led a sheltered life. One of the best examples of how this comes out in her writings is in the beginning portion of this book. We see her and her husband debating over modes of transportation. The general advises them that only two guards will be able to accompany them. When debating over the means of travel she illustrates the different methods, mule driven carriages, they are really just boxes with wheels, she has a very “snooty ” sounding attitude. This was an obvious result of her pampered lifestyle. She was properly and carefully educated. After her marriage she continued to lead a good life. She never really had to deal with any of the problems she observed in life. Her parents may have dealt with certain hardships, but with the exception of her father dying, she didn’t experience it that directly. This may have been a different time period, but parents usually have a way of trying to shelter their children from certain things when possible. She was able to observe what such adversity can and does do to families, and could sympathize somewhat with others.

I believe Fanny’s writings can be useful as a source for social history. One reason is because she was there. She was able, for the most part, to see and observe the trials and tribulations, good times and bad, almost firsthand. It is important to understand how her writings have been affected and bias. This is imperative in determining the merits of her work as a source for social history. Her work will only be a beneficial source for social history if you consider her biases and opinions that could affect her writing. If these issues are not considered, this work could be an informative source, but not one that illustrate the time and events clearly. I believe that by keeping her own ideas and experiences in mind when using this source for social history, will make her accounts useful.

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