

Flora Tristán and María Nieves Y Bustamante, Two Moments In 19th Century Peruvian Literature

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Abstract

*Peruvian literature of the 19th century has important representatives that have been studied by critics. Its contextual conditions are highlighted, especially with two transcendental historical events: the independence of Peru and the War of the Pacific. Flora Tristán published *Peregrinaciones de una paria* at a time when independence was being consolidated in Peru. Later, María Nieves y Bustamante published *Jorge o el hijo del pueblo* after the war with Chile. Both writers constitute two creative representations of historical moments of Peruvian society. The first based on a hybrid text: a mix of personal diary, travel chronicle and adventure novel; and the second, as a historical and romantic novel from the late 19th century in Peru. The objective of this essay is to explore the historical representation in the literature carried out by these two writers.*

Keywords: *Flora Tristán, Peregrinaciones De Una Paria, María Nieves Y Bustamante, Jorge O El Hijo Del Pueblo, Historical Novel.*

INTRODUCTION

Literature in Peru begins with the chronicles that the Spanish wrote upon their arrival in America about the events that occurred in this new conquered land. In the Viceroyalty of Peru, two chroniclers stood out, of the several that existed, who in some way inaugurated Peruvian literature. They were Guamán Poma de Ayala with *Nueva Coronica y buen gobierno* (1800) written at the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century and the mestizo “Inca” Garcilaso de la Vega, author of *Comentarios Reales de los Incas* (1943) [1609]. At the dawn of Peruvian literature, it was disintegrated in various places without having its own unity. Its writers wrote and published their works in isolation, whether poetry, narrative and theater. Even the drama *Ollantay* (1998), by an unidentified author, maintains many theories about the time of its composition. Therefore, we can deduce the complexity of a literary organization in those times. However, until the arrival of Independence in 1821, Peruvian literature acquired other nuances with works whose authors criticized the Lima society of that time, such as the cases of Manuel Asencio Segura and his comedy *Ña Catita* (1969), published for the first time in 1854, and Felipe Pardo y Aliaga with his costumbrista article *Un Viaje* (1842). The latter describes the Lima Creole youth with all its frivolities and defects. On the other hand, at the same time, other works were being created in various parts of the country, books that have marked Peruvian literature of the second half of the 19th century. At that time, an integrated national literature had not been formed, but rather composed of different manifestations in various places in the country.

The appearance of *Peregrinaciones de una paria* by Flora Tristán (Paris 1803-Bordeaux 1844), published in 1838, caused a stir never seen before in the dominant literate society of Lima and Arequipa. The historical context takes place in the first years of the Republic of Peru after the wars of independence (1821-1824). The Franco-Peruvian writer caused a literary earthquake with this book, as she made a crude representation of the events that occurred in Peru and where she was the protagonist and witness. This text, which contains a series of fragmentary chapters of his trip to Peru, is written in a genre that is a mixture of memoirs and historical

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chronicle. This work shares a critical representation of the actions of the elites in the recent republic of Peru. It also constitutes a valuable document of the European perspective on Peruvian cultural and political dynamics.

On the other hand, the publication of *Jorge o el hijo del pueblo*, by María Nieves y Bustamante (Arequipa, 1861-1947), published in 1892, constitutes a magnificent representation of the events that occur in the southern Andean region of Peru, Arequipa, and the terrible events that occurred as a result of the civil wars in struggle for power. The historical context of its publication occurs after the war with Chile (1879-1884), although the time represented in the novel is earlier. The civil war that occurred in Peru from 1856-1858 was known as the Arequipa Revolution of 1856. The confrontation between liberals and conservatives featured President Ramón Castilla and General Manuel Ignacio de Vivanco.

The novel highlights a marked regionalism and a credible representation of the social classes in Peru. It is important to observe the different evaluations of the two mentioned works. The literature of María Nieves and Bustamante, unlike that of Flora Tristán, has not been properly studied and valued in recent years in Peru, where important studies of women's productions in the 19th century stand out. These two works constitute a great example of the creative talent of two Peruvian writers. In this work, we will explore some important characteristics of both works, starting from the context of their production. Some peculiarities of these two key moments of women's writing in the 19th century will be exposed.

Peregrinaciones De Una Paria

Flora Tristán is an exceptional case in Peruvian and universal literature. First, because his work has transcended several limits. Some have to do not only with what he wrote but with the way he wrote it. His best-known work in Peru is *Peregrinaciones de una paria*, but not the only one. The first edition was published in French by the printing press of Arthurs Bertrand in 1838, and contains the events of his trip to Peru between 1833 and 1834.

The text is written through a testimony in a unique way. The subject who evokes the facts does not intend to assert a truth, but on the contrary is full of doubts. This can disconcert the reader, since generally in the testimonial genre the narrator tries to have his perspective of the events prefixed as a truth above that of others. The narrator of a testimony writes his "truth".

John Beverley (1987) reflects on the character of testimony in literature:

Parte de la razón de ser del testimonio es que escapa a nuestras categorizaciones usuales, y en particular a la distinción entre lo literario y lo no literario. Podemos, sin embargo, distinguir en nuestra selección una forma general: un testimonio es una narración -usualmente pero no obligatoriamente del tamaño de una novela o novela corta- contada en primera persona gramatical por un narrador que es a la vez el protagonista (o el testigo) de su propio relato. Su unidad narrativa suele ser una "vida" o una vivencia particularmente significativa (situación laboral, militancia política, encarcelamiento, etc.) (1987, pág. 9).

In that sense, the testimony explained by Beverley fits the description of the testimonial nature of *Pilgrimages of a Pariah*. The text, also narrated as a travel chronicle, uses literary and non-literary elements. The plot places the difficult position of a Franco-Peruvian woman in the first half of the 19th century. Flora Tristán's life experience takes place on the edge of desperation. That is why his episodic, descriptive, allegorical and personal narrative was so successful.

As we mentioned before, *Peregrinaciones de una paria* has several characteristics that make it difficult to classify it into a single literary genre. It is written as a personal diary, but also as a travel chronicle and an adventure novel. Fragmentary writing plausibly supports the fact that memories and evocations of memory offer evidence of what is meant and not of what others want to tell about the reality of the characters. In that sense, there is an incessant search for the verisimilitude of the story, for the importance of creating the version that is being narrated, so that it does not seem like a falsified version of reality but rather real. We agree with Beverley about the value of testimony from a formal point of view.

In *Peregrinaciones* Flora Tristán informs us of a good part of the literary and real plot of her own life at the same time. It's almost like a novel adventure. He was born in a time whose context was very difficult due to the wars that occurred in Europe and the uprisings in South America. His father, Mariano Tristán, was a Spanish soldier originally from the Peruvian viceroyalty. The Tristán family was related to the upper and ruling class of Peru. A very special situation for his family, since almost all the members and relatives held very important positions for the Spanish crown. In the war between Spain and France, Flora Tristán and her mother had to face the death of Mariano Tristán, and with it orphanhood. This event will definitely mark Flora Tristán, since her paternal family will not support her and they will be left with many financial problems.

Later, she married André Chazal, a lithographer. As a result of this relationship and due to family and social pressure, she married him (1821-1838). They had four children. The marriage was very problematic, since Chazal was an alcoholic. An important event will transform Flora Tristán's life. Through a ship captain she sent a letter to her uncle in Peru, Don Pío Tristán, a very powerful man, who had been interim viceroy when the viceroyalty ended, and then one of the heads of government in the area. southern Peru when the Republic began. The Tristán family was very powerful, they resided in the city of Arequipa. They were related to the other aristocratic families of the nascent republic of Peru. They had benefits since the times of the viceroyalty. This power and influence was observed both in the military, economic, clergy and political aspects, which were made up of several members of the family.

Pío Tristán's response will open great hope for Flora, since at last a small window of justice was glimpsed so that she can inherit the money that belonged to her from her father and, in this way, get out of the situation in which she lived. The trip to Peru was a bit stormy, since she was the only woman on board the crew. When she finally arrived in the recent republic of Peru, she was struck by meeting her distinguished family and sharing their customs, a social class to which she was not accustomed. All these details are narrated in great detail in his book.

The contextual framework is important to understand the roots and motivations of the work. On the one hand, we highlight the incredible curiosity and intelligence of Flora Tristán at a time when women occupied a place below men in European and Western society. On the other hand, we find a great motivation in the dispossession to which she has been subjected, since her uncle will refuse to recognize her inheritance. Her paternal family does not know that she was married and had four children in Europe, nor that she had fled her violent husband and that she was persecuted by the justice system.

Flora Tristán had a very productive experience in her observation of Peruvian customs, especially of the ruling classes. Unfortunately, the objective of his trip: the recovery of family assets through an inheritance did not happen. She was not recognized as a legitimate heir because she could not show a certificate of her parents' marriage. The context of his birth in France (the war between France and Spain) did not allow legitimacy, in addition to the sudden death of his father. For this reason, his childhood and youth were very difficult in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century.

These controversial situations must also be taken into account as motivators for the book. When this appeared, the upper class society in Lima and the city of Arequipa were terribly offended. The family will cancel the pension they sent her and Flora Tristán will be left alone and unprotected before the world. However, this book will also help you to be recognized and integrate into the intellectual society of your country. Soon, she became an important woman, whose actions must have been related to her somewhat hasty intellectual formation. Her husband André Chazal will finally try to murder her and in this way she will get rid of him, since he will go to jail.

We wonder how we can interpret a book like *Peregrinaciones de una paria*. It has the characteristics of a personal diary, but in many addresses he also addresses his fellow Peruvians. In addition, it has important narrative features similar to the French serial novel. Also, a series of characteristics of different types of text, which make it a unique, very singular book. Some important ideas that we can take from reading are the following.

First, the question of literary genre. In addition to the testimonial genre that we have described previously, Tristán narrates his diary as the great adventures of the European texts that wrote about trips to the other side of the world. We can make a comparison above all with Robinson Crusoe, by Daniel Defoe (1719), and with Gulliver's Travels, by Jonathan Swift (1726).

Adventure novels always had a first-person narrator's voice. Also, they predicted the surprise of the journey towards unknown worlds. It catches our attention that within the novel Robinson Crusoe, there is also a kind of personal diary, where the narrator writes down in a very meticulous way all the observations he has about a new world for him, and also about the customs of the people. from other places, such as natives and pirates. In the case of Gulliver's Travels, too, there is a fascination with the new world, which one is just about to discover. Although there is a much more fantastic fable compared to Daniel Defoe's text; However, it also points to the form of a first-person narrative as a testimonial story.

In the case of Flora Tristán, a character with special characteristics is perfectly constructed. He designs his alter ego very well, and, as we said before, although it seems that he takes his own figure, he adds elements that make it a unique narrative, especially due to the number of misfortunes that have happened to the protagonist. Her only hope upon arriving in another world totally unknown to her is inheritance, a question of justice that could solve her problems.

Another element to highlight in the work is the role of women in Peruvian society. Flora Tristán will be struck by the fact that in the recent Peruvian republic, women have a preponderance of talking about politics and attending debates on this topic in different places. In this aspect, the nascent republic was much superior and modern to the European republics where women did not have that type of space to debate politics.

Isabelle Tauzin (1995) highlights that one of the characters who will powerfully attract the attention of Flora Tristán is Francisca Zubiaga de Gamarra, nicknamed "La marshal". She had the power to govern like her husband and was involved in all government actions, including military activities. This unique case was not observed in Europe, so for Tristan it had a notable positive characteristic.

The book is divided into two parts. In the first, composed of 8 chapters, the adventures are narrated from his departure aboard the boat El Mexicano, and his passage through Valparaíso, the port of Islay and finally his arrival in Arequipa. In the second, made up of 10 chapters, it narrates the events that occurred in Arequipa, his visit to Lima and his subsequent departure.

For Leticia Urién (2005), the 19th century constitutes an important center for feminism, since it is observed that the fight for equality of the sexes was desired.

El feminismo de Tristán bebe de las fuentes del 89. Entró al debate sobre las mujeres. Especialmente en la obra de Mary Wollstonecraft. Flora dedicó la convalecencia de su tercer parto a leer este texto fundacional del feminismo: Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer. Podemos imaginar el impacto y apoyo intelectual y vital que supuso esta lectura. (...) La guía que debió suponer Wollstonecraft para Tristán se puede seguir en la formulación de algunas vindicaciones, especialmente la educación en igualdad de l@s niñ@s. Y en determinados métodos como poner la argumentación de la razón al servicio de la emancipación de la humanidad o al desenmascarar los discursos de la excelencia femenina. (Urién, 2005, pág. 6)

Apparently, the impact, described by Urién, would have been effective for the position that Flora Tristán held not only at the time of writing Peregrinaciones de una paria, but also the rest of her work. Female participation is essential in extreme situations. As we have reviewed, the contextual events in which she lived were very difficult. Her participation as a woman in the fundamental events of two worlds, the European and the Latin American, made her understand the urgent agenda on the role of women and their participation in society.

Jorge O El Hijo Del Pueblo

María Nieves y Bustamante, (Arequipa, 1861-1947 Arequipa) lived in a temporal context three years after the events narrated in her own novel. Educated in a Creole family, she received a careful education.

In 1879, María Nieves experienced the War of the Pacific firsthand. Her career as an editor began when she joined the newspaper "La Bolsa", where she wrote critical articles against the conflict with Chile and denounced the political injustices of the time. It was in this context that the writer Clorinda Matto de Turner, who would later become editor-in-chief of the same newspaper, arrived in Arequipa. Clorinda considered María Nieves her "sister of letters", and the friendship between both authors will endure over time.

The writer chose to address an important topic for the memory of Arequipa: the revolution from 1856 to 1858. The fact was that General Manuel Ignacio de Vivanco led the White City during the revolution and fought against the president of the time, Ramón Castilla. He did not tolerate this uprising and, with his army, attacked and invaded the city. Not only did he defeat the insurrection, but he also caused the death of more than 3,000 inhabitants of Arequipa. In the novel *Jorge or the son of the people*, Nieves details this civil war between Peruvians, but also adds the story of the romance between Jorge Flores and Elena Velarde, which was not successful due to social disparities: Jorge is a poor mestizo known as "a son of the people", while she is an upper-class Creole woman.

The novel was published in installments in the newspaper "La Bolsa" starting in 1888, and received a warm reception among readers until its definitive publication in book form in 1892. It is divided into two volumes, tracing its plot in a historical context which reflects the resistance of the Arequipa people against the government of Ramón Castilla. The work also thoroughly explores the marked differences between the different social classes and their complex relationships with the politicians and generals in power, such as General Vivanco and Alfredo Iriarte.

The protagonist, Jorge, a humble man, is attracted to Elena, a young woman from high society. However, Elena is forced to marry Alfredo Iriarte, a man of high social position. Jorge is the son of Guillermo de Torre, an influential figure in Arequipa society, despite his humble origins. Over time, his legitimacy as a son is revealed. The plot unfolds tragically when Elena discovers that her marriage is fake and dies, immersed in sadness and depression. At that time, Jorge dedicated himself to protecting his city against the offensive of the Castilian government, facing obstacles and fighting for equity and freedom.

The novel tells the events that occurred between 1857 and 1858, an important period in the republican history of Peru. The work takes us through fictional characters and some real ones to the historical feat that took place in Arequipa. The end of this stage was the massacre against the population by the military forces of President Castilla. It is a historical novel that gives us a moving and vibrant vision of those turbulent times.

The novel, in recent years, has been the subject of several readings. For Leonardo (2018):

Jorge o El hijo del pueblo no solo dialoga con su contexto local o regional, sino que el proyecto discursivo que animan sus páginas dialoga con los hechos que se estaban desarrollando en el ámbito nacional, referidos a los debates que implicaban nociones como nación, modernidad e identidad. María Nieves y Bustamante formula en su novela un proyecto político de integración de clases sociales en Arequipa. Dicho proyecto está pensado desde las élites blancas y letradas, y tiene la intención de incorporar a los sectores populares, a los cuales se les representa como mestizos (mezcla de lo blanco y lo indígena), en calidad de subalternos. Desde esta lógica se propone una relación jerárquica entre los grupos de poder y el pueblo, asumiendo el primero el papel de hermano mayor del segundo, necesitado éste último de tutelaje y protección. (2018, pág. 119)

The novel is not limited to a dialogue with its local or regional context; rather, his speech is intertwined with the national events of the time. These events relate to fundamental debates about notions such as national identity and modernity. Through her work, the author formulates a political project that seeks the integration of the different social classes in Arequipa. From a historical perspective, the novel is set at a crucial moment in Peruvian history, marked by tensions and conflicts. The white and literate elites, represented in the plot, design a plan to incorporate the popular sectors, often described as mestizos (a mixture of white and indigenous). The latter are considered subordinate, and a hierarchical relationship is proposed between the power groups and the people in general.

In this context, the role of the elites is similar to that of an "older brother", assuming the responsibility of guiding and protecting the people. However, this guardianship also implies a certain amount of control and

dominance. The novel invites us to reflect on the complexities of identity, politics and power relations in a society in constant transformation. "Jorge or the son of the people" is not only a local narrative, but a mirror in which the tensions and aspirations of an entire nation are reflected in search of its identity and its place in the world.

Another important detail about the novel, according to Leonardo, is that Jorge o el hijo del pueblo is the first Peruvian novel whose protagonist is the Peruvian mestizo. However, this mixing is not presented equally, but is marked by an implicit hierarchy. The Western is always presented as official and true, as part of a real and present culture. The indigenous, on the other hand, remains largely hidden. It manifests itself in some hybrid or mestizo expressions, such as Yaraví. This literary approach reflects the social tensions and complexities of identity in the historical context in which the novel takes place. Through its pages, María Nieves y Bustamante invites us to reflect on the dynamics of power, discrimination and the fight for equality in a society in transformation.

On the other hand, Ferreira (1997) highlights the relationship of the novel with the critical reality of Peru. And he identifies that this work shows us a modernizing proposal about history: a people who fight against centralism and its leaders, and the idea of an integrated nation:

Jorge o el hijo del pueblo, es pues, una novela que indudablemente evidencia el momento crítico que vivía el Perú decimonónico. Los problemas que se presentan en los núcleos familiares y en las relaciones amorosas parecieran ser indicios de los problemas que padecía la sociedad arequipeña de esa época. En ese orden de cosas, la propuesta modernizadora de Nieves y Bustamante tendría dos vertientes: por un lado, dejar sentado en la Historia que fue el pueblo arequipeño quien luchó contra las imposiciones del poder central de la república y no los caudillos militares en el poder, y por otro lado, su empeño por la unificación nacional (1997, pág. 33).

This position helps us understand the idea by which the novel transcends its regional position. Understood not as a commitment to position oneself against the national project, but as just rebellion. These regional conflicts, especially from the southern Andean region to the capital, Lima, will extend into the 21st century.

CONCLUSIONS

We have explored two important artistic manifestations in Peruvian history. The first, *Peregrinaciones de una paria*, manages to configure a representation of Peruvian society in the early moments of the Republic, especially the events that occur in the cities of Arequipa and Lima, where the most important families live in terms of the economy. The work combines a series of elements in its production that make it difficult to classify it into a single literary genre. Its fragmentary nature helps it to be represented more effectively in terms of the genres of the chronicle, the intimate diary, or the adventure novel.

Regarding her approach to feminism, there is a clear influence of the precursors of this movement at the beginning of the 19th century in Europe. We cannot leave aside the life on the edge in which Flora Tristán lived and the unfair and terrible conditions she had to go through. This type of rebellious behavior could have given her intellectual status in her time and continued her activities in favor of women's equality and workers' rights.

The second manifestation is the novel *Jorge o el hijo del pueblo* by María Nieves y Bustamante. In this case, we identify the contextual representation of their society in the 50s of the 19th century in the city of Arequipa and closest to the events related to the Pacific War. Like the work described above, it constitutes a social complaint about the injustices to which people considered within the town were subjected; that is, the most humble. Unlike *Peregrinaciones de una paria*, this work is easily identifiable within the genre of historical and romantic novel. The important ingredient is that it constitutes a very important document to understand the problems to which the poorest of a population were subjected in an event such as a civil war. Some important subthemes are regional identity, patriotic values and love for the city, in this case Arequipa. Also, we observe the incorporation of popular elements to the narrative such as the popular language of the south and the famous and Yaravís.

We believe that both works constitute the basic aspects of the Peruvian literary tradition written by women in the 19th century. Both had an important relationship with the elites, mainly from southern Peru and the city of Lima. Both, also, had an outstanding type of education and an important participation in the cultural and literary debate of their time. Although Flora Tristán's work was harshly criticized at first, it was later subject to significant appreciation. In the case of María Nieves y Bustamante, it is important to recognize the great acceptance that her work had in the city of Arequipa and, therefore, the great value that women could be the object of, without any type of contempt regarding their gender.

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