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How Might Women Play a Role in the Revival of Peru?

Flora Tristan indicates in her travel diaries that her “most sincere wish” is to “enable the Peruvians to regain [a] status among the nations of the New World,” and in order to reach this objective, she states that “the road you must take to achieve prosperity [is to] establish schools in even the humblest of villages, for this is the urgent need of the present” (Tristan 11, 10). Tristan insinuates how women might play a role in this resurgence of Peru later on in her writings, where she explains that women are superior to men (at least in the Peru-Lima region) in terms of their moral values, intelligence, and work ethic. By referencing these women of Lima in their sayas and these Camp Followers of Peru, she displays the manner in which these groups of ladies are clearly superior. While the women of Lima mentally dominate over men in an obvious, societal fashion, the ravanas of Peru relay the male species’ inferiority by voluntarily undertaking uncompensated hardships that other men in their society would, rather than do such work themselves, prefer to kill themselves (Tristan 16). Each of these groups of women exemplifies the characteristics laid out by Tristan that will advance Peru into a global relevance in her time period.

The captivating women of Lima coupled with their shrouding, mysterious sayas are truly a force to be reckoned with; Tristan herself reiterates this statement when she says these women “reign [in Lima] uncontested” (Tristan 27). However, to Tristan’s dismay, the women of Lima do not "cultivate [their] intelligence” nor “become mistress of [themselves],” which Tristan claims they must if they are to “preserve this superiority” of woman over man (Tristan 30). Moreover, the ravanas of Peru embody the courage of women and their unwavering dedication to provide for others in spite of their own comfort (Tristan 16). This leads to the deduction that if only woman had the intelligence of the Lima ladies coupled with the courage and dedication of the ravanas, they could be a powerful, leading force in the country of Peru. As Tristan says, women can only “exercise all the influence for which God has intended the intrinsic nature of her heart” when she honors her God-given beauty by advancing her mental faculties and using her striking features to an advantage for change rather than simply seduction (Tristan 30). In Tristan’s eyes, women could drastically change the entire history of Peru’s involvement with the most advanced nations if they would incorporate their divine advantages of beauty, intelligence, and strength.

Overall, women are blatantly superior to men by means of their attractive nature, sharp-witted mind, and moral fortitude. The role that Tristan suggests they might play in the revival of Peru as a significant entity is akin to that of an enzyme in the body: they will serve as a catalyst for change through their unique abilities. Women are unlike (and superior to) men in the sense that are “endowed … with a more loving, devoted heart than that of a man,” and Tristan solidifies this assertion through the examples of the ravanas and the women of Lima. Absorbing all of this information causes one to wonder what effect women might now have on a country in today’s social sphere.

I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work. Peter George Plotas

Works Cited

Tristan, Flora, Doris Beik, and Paul Beik. *Flora Tristan, Utopian Feminist: Her Travel Diaries and Personal Crusade*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993. Print.