

CATHARINA V. DE VALLEJO. *Anacaona. La construcción de la cacica taína de Quisqueya. Quinientos años de ideologización*. Santo Domingo: Colección del Banco Central de la República Dominicana, 2015. 300 pp.

The representation of Indigenous women in the Americas centered around the myth of Malinche, Doña Marina, for centuries, considered the betrayer of the Indigenous race and derogatorily called “La Chingada” [the one taken advantage of], as examined by many Mexican intellectuals including Octavio Paz. Similarly, to the north, it has been difficult to separate the legendary figure of Pocahontas from the stereotype of the servile Indigenous woman of traditional narratives. Catharina Vallejo, in *Anacaona. La construcción del cacica taína de Quisqueya. Quinientos años de ideologización*, tackles another one of the mythical Indigenous women, Anacaona (1474-1503), the earliest figure mentioned by the conquerors, and seeks to analyse her representation in the over half millennium that has passed since her hanging by the Spanish conquistadors.

Vallejo brings together representations of Anacaona from the earliest chronicles of the Spanish conquistadors to modern plays, music and children’s literature in French, English and Spanish. In the texts analysed, Anacaona is, turn by turn, an Indigenous woman, a cultural icon, a sexual/erotic object, an early feminist and a poet, among other descriptions, but she remains simultaneously and paradoxically, an intrepid leader and a defenseless victim.

Vallejo divides her analysis in two segments. The first corpus, from Hispanic writers and thinkers who write in Spanish, deals chronologically with texts from the colonial period (chapter one), Romanticism (chapter two), and writing from the Twentieth Century to the present (chapters three and four). The second part includes texts in French produced in France, Haiti and Quebec (chapter five), texts in English by writers like Lord Tennyson (chapter six), and, in chapter seven, Vallejo describes children’s literature, visual representations, musical and modern (re)interpretations of Anacaona, in all three languages.

In order to contextualize the Indigenous woman’s life, Vallejo returns to the period of first contact (1492) on the island baptised Hispaniola by the Spanish, probably divided at the time into a section known as Haytí and the other Quisqueya (specified in the monograph’s title) and populated by various Indigenous groups, including the Taina and Caribe. As nothing remains of Anacaona’s life and supposed poetry, Vallejo inevitably grounds her initial narrative in the descriptions made by Christian Spanish men, but is able to construct a semblance of the Indigenous woman’s life while conscious of the ambiguities of doing so from her perspective and through the gendered lense. This foundational (and very limited) biography was,

and continues to be, the fuel for narratives' retelling, adapting and (re)creating the figure of Anacaona examined by Vallejo.

Vallejo's return to this central figure is significant given the historical erasure (both literal and figurative) of the Indigenous population of the Caribbean during much of the period studied. Her analysis of the figure with respect to the socio-political, racial and cultural implications of her presence in the literary texts of different historical periods is thorough and informed by a detailed overview of the periods' history and protagonists. For example, the section on the Trujillato's use of Indigenous heritage to counter Afro-Dominican and Haitian identity is quite informative and exemplified in the books examined on the period. Vallejo also finds the common threads of the frequent sentimentalisation of the Indigenous figure in Literary Romanticism produced by writers of different origins, at a time when the Indigenous past of the island was rediscovered, after hundreds of years of absence. Along with Romanticism, Vallejo locates Anacaona's presence in magical-realist texts (Haitian writer Jacques-Stephen Alexis, for example), connecting the figure emphatically to a Latin American literary genre.

Methodically, Vallejo first presents the mentions of the Indigenous woman in each text and follows them with an analysis of the representation. While her textual analysis of all the literary texts is exemplary, Vallejo's examination of the writings of women on Anacaona, especially Salomé Enriquez de Ureña and Edwidge Danticat, are of particular interest. Vallejo also presents quotes from Haitian texts in French with a Spanish translation, many of them available to Spanish readers for the first time.

This is the most complete examination of the figure ever carried out and Vallejo's twenty-page bibliography of works on and about the topic is certainly a testimonial to her endeavour to be thorough in her analysis, initiated over twenty years ago, in 1993. The breadth of cultural references - from Sarmiento to Lamartine and Spivak - could only come from a scholar with an extensive background in Hispanic and Latin American Studies. Readers can only hope that the next edition of the book be augmented with pictures of the visual representations of Anacaona, given that this shorted section seems more an afterthought than an integral part of Vallejo's analysis. In bridging the very violent sister histories of both Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Vallejo posits a common, feminine, past just as she highlights the glaring misrepresentation of the "real" (unknown) historical figure that result from the multiple (mis)understandings of her life.

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