



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (051)

TITLE: Sacrificio y recompensa

AUTHOR: Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera

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I. OVERVIEW & SIGNIFICANCE

Awarded the gold medal by the Ateneo de Lima in 1886, *Sacrificio y recompensa* marks the triumphant literary debut of Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera, one of 19th-century Latin America's most piercing and courageous proto-feminist voices. While often viewed as a transitional work bridging romantic sentimentalism and nascent realism, the novel lays the crucial ideological groundwork for her later, more scandalous social critiques (such as *Blanca Sol*).

Through the interwoven destinies of Álvaro González, Estela Guzmán, and Catalina Montiel, Cabello dissects the hypocrisies of Lima's elite. The novel introduces a sharp critique of a patriarchal society where women, structurally deprived of educational and professional opportunities, are forced to utilize marriage as a purely transactional tool for social ascent. This volume is a foundational text for advanced courses exploring the evolution of Latin American realism, early feminist consciousness, and the cultural history of the Andean region prior to the aesthetic shifts of the 20th century.

II. CONTEXT & CRITICAL APPROACHES

This volume provides a rich framework for exploring the transition from romanticism to realism, the critique of the bourgeois marriage market, and Cabello's unique aesthetic theories.

Marriage as a Social Elevator:

- Analyze the socioeconomic constraints placed upon women in 19th-century Lima. How does the novel critique the institution of marriage not as a romantic culmination, but as a forced economic strategy for women lacking other avenues of survival and social mobility?
- Examine the character of Elisa (the beautiful adopted daughter). How does her "purely feminine ambition to shine, to ascend, and to escape her humble condition" serve as the direct precursor to Cabello's later, more infamous anti-heroine, Blanca Sol?

The Aesthetics of "Sentimental Realism":

- Discuss Cabello's prologue, where she states her goal is to separate herself from the "crude realism" in vogue and instead seek the real within the "beauty of sentiment." How does she navigate the tension between exposing social decay (naturalism) and maintaining moral elevation?
- Analyze the opening chapter's juxtaposition of the sublime, pulsating natural landscape (El Salto del Fraile) with the artificial, prosaic reality of the city and its social hierarchies. How does this spatial contrast mirror the moral conflicts of the characters?



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III. ADVANCED DISCUSSION & RESEARCH PROMPTS

These prompts encourage deep engagement with the text, critical thinking, and research into historical, biographical, and literary contexts.

The Genesis of the Feminist Critique:

- Compare *Sacrificio y recompensa* (1886) with Cabello's theoretical treatise *La novela moderna* (1892). How do her early fictional experiments with realism align with her mature theoretical defense of the novel as an instrument for social reform?

The Patriarchal Backlash:

- Research the historical reception of Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera in Lima's male-dominated literary circles. How did the initial praise for this "acceptable" romantic work curdle into vicious personal attacks once she escalated her social critiques in subsequent novels?

Space and Modernity:

- Evaluate the descriptions of Chorrillos and Lima in the first chapter. How does the narrator use architecture and urbanization—contrasting the "vetusta casa de Gobierno" with the "suntuosos palacios" of Chorrillos—to critique the superficiality and unequal modernization of the Peruvian state?

IV. SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Text:

- **Cabello de Carbonera, Mercedes.** *La novela moderna*. 1892.
- _____. *Sacrificio y recompensa*. Edición basada en la de Lima, Imprenta de Torres Aguirre, 1886. Stockcero, 2005

Key Secondary Scholarship & Context:

- **Comte, Auguste.** *Discurso sobre el espíritu positivo*. 1844.
- **Denegri, Francesca.** *El abanico y la cigarrera: La primera generación de mujeres ilustradas en el Perú*. Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1996.
- **Gorriti, Juana Manuela.** *Obras completas*. Ediciones de la ora, 1999.
- **Peluffo, Ana.** *Lágrimas andinas: Sentimentalismo, género y política en el siglo XIX latinoamericano*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005.
- **Saint-Amant, Isabelle.** *El realismo en el Perú: Tradición y modernidad*. Editorial Universitaria, 2010.
- **Spencer, Herbert.** *First Principles*. 1862.
- **Ward, Thomas.** *La resistencia cultural: La nación en el ensayo de las Américas*. Universidad Ricardo Palma, 2004.
- **Zola, Émile.** *Le Roman expérimental*. 1880.



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V. RELATED STOCKCERO RESOURCES

Female Emancipation & Literary Voices: 6-Book Bundle.

(Includes Mercedes Cabello's *Blanca Sol*, alongside *La Emancipada*, *Una mujer de fin de siglo*, and *La rosa muerta*).

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