



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (056)

TEXT: *Peregrinaciones de una alma triste* (1876)

AUTHOR: Juana Manuela Gorriti (Argentina, 1818–1892)

EDITOR: [Stockcero annotated edition, based on the 1886 and modern critical prologues]

PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

(Based on the prologue by Mary G. Berg and the 1886 prologue by Mariano A. Pelliza)

A WOMAN WRITER ON THE MOVE: TRAVEL, EXILE, AND AUTONOMY

Life as Permanent Exile:

Juana Manuela Gorriti's own biography is marked by political exile, constant travel, and personal reinvention. Born into a prominent independence-era family in Salta, she experienced early displacement when her father, General José Ignacio Gorriti, fled to Bolivia after defeat in the civil wars. This life of exile, border crossings, and precarious political situations becomes the experiential matrix for *Peregrinaciones de una alma triste*, where the protagonist Laura embodies the figure of the perpetual traveler who can never fully "belong" to one place.

The Female Traveler as Transgressive Subject:

Laura's journey is a radical gesture of female autonomy in a 19th-century Latin American context. She escapes a sickbed in Lima—over-medicated, infantilized, and supposedly condemned to die of tuberculosis—to board a steamship alone, using only the contents of her savings bank. Throughout her travels in Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, and back to Peru, she chooses the most difficult and risky routes, often refusing the protections and expectations imposed on women. By cross-dressing and traveling independently, she temporarily suspends gender norms and claims the freedom of a "republican citizen" subject.

Health, Movement, and the Rejection of Passive Femininity:

The novel frames illness not just as a physical condition but as a social and gendered prison. Laura's refusal to take the doctor's arsenic treatment, her decision to "walk alone and without support," and her exhilaration at being the only passenger not seasick all symbolize a break with the role of the fragile, passive woman. Movement becomes cure: the open air, the deserts, the rivers, and the demanding journeys literally restore her health. The "disease of the Wandering Jew"—the need for constant movement to avoid relapse—turns into a metaphor for a new, mobile, and self-directed female subjectivity.

INTERCALATED TALES: EXILE, VIOLENCE, AND JUSTICE

A Parallel Text of Exiles and Outsiders:

The novel alternates Laura's travel narrative with a series of intercalated tales that function like a secondary, parallel text. These nine stories—about a French sailor,



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Carmela and Enrique, the exiled teacher, rival schoolgirls, the gaucho and the blond child, the disinherited mulatto heir, the destruction of Cangallé, and the two female prisoners in Rio de Janeiro—share a common thread: exile and marginalization. Foreigners, gauchos, enslaved people, illegitimate children, and uprooted women all find themselves outside legal and social protection. Their stories highlight forms of injustice that Laura witnesses but does not herself directly suffer.

Conflict, Violence, and the Limits of Conciliation:

Many of these tales dramatize extreme violence: bandit attacks, civil wars, assaults by “savages,” arbitrary abuses by military officers and landowners, and the structural brutality of slavery and patriarchy. Laura often acts as mediator or helper—reuniting lost children with families, redeeming an enslaved woman and her seven children, or attempting to free an unjustly imprisoned Paraguayan woman—but her interventions do not always succeed. The text insists that benevolent individual action cannot fully repair systemic injustice; some situations remain tragically unresolved.

Doubling, Female Pairs, and the Question of Identity:

Gorriti repeatedly stages pairs of women who embody opposing traits: Carmela and her sense of honor versus romantic passion; Anastasia and Patricia as self-sacrificing versus aggressive; the Spanish woman and the Indigenous woman at Cangallé competing to the death. These dualities—good/evil, light/darkness, passivity/aggression—externalize the internal conflicts of female subjectivity. When these polarities are split between two characters, they tend to end in destruction; when they coexist in a single woman (as in Laura), they can lead to a more complex, if precarious, balance. The tales thus explore how gender, race, and class identities are constructed and contested.

GENRE, MEMORY, AND NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Hybrid Form: Travelogue, Adventure Novel, and Memory Text:

Peregrinaciones de una alma triste is structurally hybrid. It presents itself as a series of travel memoirs framed by a dialogue between two women friends, Laura and her unnamed interlocutor, both Argentines living in Lima. The explicit comparisons to *The Thousand and One Nights* underline its episodic structure and its mixture of realistic observation with legendary and romantic elements. This hybridity challenges rigid 19th-century genre definitions and anticipates modern critical interest in hybrid narrative forms.

Memory as Shared and Liberating Practice:

The framing friend frequently supplements or corrects Laura’s memories, especially regarding their shared childhood in Salta. Memory becomes collective rather than purely individual: what endures is “shared memory.” The novel is saturated with the pleasure of recollection; Gorriti devotes a large proportion of the text to revisiting childhood, past landscapes, and formative episodes. Remembering is not a retreat from life but a way to shape the future, turning personal and national history into a resource for ongoing projects.

The American Landscape as Moral and Political Space:



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As Mariano A. Pelliza highlights in his 1886 prologue, the novel's strongest impact lies not merely in romantic intrigue but in the vivid panorama of 19th-century South America. From Lima to the Andean valleys, from the Chaco and the Bermejo River to the Amazonian forests, Gorriti uses national landscapes as sites where social conflicts are staged: frontier violence, racial hierarchies, the absence of justice for the poor ("for the poor there is no justice"), and the fragility of coexistence between cultures. The lament for destroyed communities such as Cangallé, and the depiction of the gaucho's internal exile, place Peregrinaciones alongside other foundational texts that interrogate "civilization and barbarism," while giving that debate a distinctively female and transnational perspective.

PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Travel, Illness, and Female Independence

How does Laura's escape from her sickbed in Lima challenge 19th-century medical and social expectations for women? In what ways does travel function as both a physical cure and a metaphor for autonomy? Consider the contrast between the "invalid" confined to the home and the energetic traveler who regains health in motion.

Exile as a Shared Human Condition

The prologue emphasizes exile as a common theme linking Laura and the characters in the intercalated tales (foreigners, gauchos, enslaved people, exiled teachers, illegitimate heirs). In what sense does the novel present the human condition itself as a form of permanent exile? How does this idea interact with national borders, class differences, and gender?

Intercalated Tales and the Border between Reality and Fiction

Compare Laura's main travel narrative with at least two of the inserted stories (for example, Carmela and Enrique Ariel; the exiled teacher; the destruction of Cangallé). How do these stories deepen or complicate our understanding of the main plot? Do they feel like "pure fiction" within a "real" travelogue, or does the text blur that distinction?

Women, Honor, and the Limits of Romantic Love

In the story of Carmela Villanueva and Enrique Ariel, Carmela sacrifices love to fulfill a promise and to protect her sense of honor. Laura interprets this as a choice of "honor" over religion and passion. How does Gorriti critique traditional romantic plots where the only alternatives for women are love or the convent? In what ways is Laura's own decision "to follow the path of the solitary woman" similar to and different from Carmela's?

Violence, Justice, and the Law

Several episodes (the gaucho of Río Blanco, the disinherited mulatto heir, the enslaved African woman, the imprisoned Paraguayan) question whether formal law can deliver justice. Where does the novel suggest that justice is achieved only outside



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legal structures—or not at all? How does Laura's role as witness, mediator, or benefactor highlight both the possibilities and the limitations of individual action?

National Landscape and “Civilization/Barbarism”

Drawing on the 1886 prologue by Pelliza, discuss how *Peregrinaciones* reworks the classic Latin American opposition between “civilization” and “barbarism.” Does the novel simply repeat that dichotomy, or does it destabilize it through the depiction of frontier zones, Indigenous communities, and the brutality of supposedly “civilized” actors (officers, landowners, urban elites)?

PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

What best describes the narrative form of *Peregrinaciones de una alma triste*?

- A) A conventional romantic novel set entirely in Lima
- B) A series of travel memoirs framed by conversations between two friends, with intercalated tales
- C) A historical chronicle of the War of Independence
- D) A collection of purely fantastic legends with no realistic elements

Correct Answer: B

Why does Laura initially flee her home in Lima?

- A) To follow her husband into political exile



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- B) To enter a convent after a broken engagement
- C) To escape an arranged marriage imposed by her family
- D) To avoid a deadly illness and oppressive medical treatment, seeking health and freedom through travel

Correct Answer: D

Which of the following is a recurring theme in the intercalated tales?

- A) The moral superiority of European civilization over America
- B) The easy reconciliation of all social conflicts
- C) Exile, marginalization, and the difficulty of achieving justice
- D) The rejection of memory in favor of forgetting the past

Correct Answer: C

In the story of Carmela Villanueva and Enrique Ariel, what primarily motivates Carmela's decision to renounce love?

- A) A desire for wealth and social prestige
- B) Blind religious fanaticism without reflection
- C) A sense of honor and a promise she believes she must keep
- D) A secret attraction to another suitor

Correct Answer: C

What is the significance of the destruction of Cangallé within the novel?

- A) It is a minor anecdote with no connection to the main themes
- B) It illustrates harmonious coexistence between Indigenous and Spanish communities
- C) It dramatizes how racial, cultural, and gender conflicts can escalate into total ruin, leaving only ruins and corpses
- D) It serves as a simple adventure story without moral implications

Correct Answer: C

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