



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (074)

TITLE: *La rosa muerta*

AUTHOR: Aurora Cáceres

EDITOR: Thomas Ward

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I. OVERVIEW & SIGNIFICANCE

Published in Paris in 1914, Aurora Cáceres's *La rosa muerta* is a groundbreaking hypermodernist novel that aggressively challenges the ideological and gendered parameters of its literary movement. While the text employs classic modernist aesthetics—cosmopolitan settings (Berlin and Paris), orientalism, the exaltation of technology, and an omnipresent atmosphere of decadence and illness—it subverts the traditional male-dominated narrative by granting its female protagonist total agency over her sexual and physical existence.

This critical edition, prepared by Thomas Ward, resurrects the silenced voice of Cáceres, the cosmopolitan daughter of a Peruvian president, whose intellectual contributions were often eclipsed by the blatant misogyny of her contemporaries (including figures like Rubén Darío and Miguel de Unamuno). In a striking departure from typical 19th-century domestic dramas, the men in *La rosa muerta* are not oppressive husbands to be fled, but rather men of science (gynecologists and doctors) with whom the protagonist interacts on her own terms. By placing the female body, medical science, and industrial globalization at the center of the narrative, this kit facilitates an advanced study of the feminist currents within Latin American modernism and the early 20th-century intersection of technology, medicine, and female autonomy.

II. CONTEXT & CRITICAL APPROACHES

This volume provides a rich framework for exploring the expansion of the modernist canon, the medicalization of the female body, and the impact of the industrial age on literature.

Modernism and the Female Voice:

- Analyze the historical exclusion of female authors from the Latin American *modernista* canon. How does Cáceres appropriate modernist stylistic traits while dismantling its traditionally patriarchal worldview?
- Examine the protagonist's active control over her sexual life. How do the scandalous (for 1914) scenes set in a Parisian clinic redefine the female subject from a passive object of male veneration to an active explorer of her own physiology?

The Aesthetics of Illness and the Macabre:

- Discuss the pervasive theme of disease (specifically uterine fibroids) in the novel. How does Cáceres use physical decay not as a symbol of passive nihilism, but as a catalyst for active exploration and liberation?
- Compare the treatment of illness in *La rosa muerta* with other Latin American texts, such as Juana Manuela Gorriti's *Peregrinaciones de una alma triste*. How has the relationship between women and medical authority evolved from the 19th to the 20th century?



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Technology and the Industrial Age:

- Analyze the integration of industrial technology (electric light, pneumatic postal tubes) into the narrative. How do these mechanical advancements serve as metaphors for a rapidly shrinking, globalized world, and how do they alter the nature of human communication and romance in the novel?

III. ADVANCED DISCUSSION & RESEARCH PROMPTS

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

- **Biography as Counter-Narrative:** Thomas Ward's introduction details Cáceres's oppressive real-life marriage to the Guatemalan modernist Enrique Gómez Carrillo. Discuss how *La rosa muerta* functions as a fictional antidote to her biographical reality. How does the protagonist's exercise of free will contrast with the author's own experience of marital despotism?
- **The Medical Gaze and Female Agency:** Analyze the relationship between the protagonist and her doctors (Barrios, Castel, Blumen). How does the clinical setting allow the protagonist to shed societal constraints (appearing *au naturel*) and interact with men outside the traditional, chauvinistic domestic sphere?
- **Orientalism and the Cosmopolitan Sphere:** Discuss the character of Dr. Castel, described as being of "oriental origin, but of Parisian education." How does Cáceres utilize the modernist trope of orientalism, and how is the "exotic" made acceptable or refined through the filter of European cosmopolitanism and science?
- **The Pan-Latin and Transatlantic Networks:** Research Cáceres's concept of the "Unión Literaria." How does her life and work reflect a desire to build transatlantic cultural bridges between South America, Spain, and Francophone Europe during the era of industrial globalization?

IV. SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Text:

- Cáceres, Aurora. *La rosa muerta*. Edited by Thomas Ward. SpanishBookPress. (TK ORDER: 074)

Key Secondary Scholarship & Context:

- Ward, Thomas. Introduction to *La rosa muerta*. Stockcero.
- Cáceres, Z. Aurora. *Mi vida con Enrique Gómez Carrillo*. (Crucial for biographical context).
- Gorriti, Juana Manuela. *Peregrinaciones de una alma triste*. (For comparative study on women and medicine).
- Glickman, Robert Jay. *Vestales del Templo azul: notas sobre el feminismo hispanoamericano en la época modernista*.
- Tenorio-Gavin, Lucero. *El ensayo latinoamericano de escritoras: Asuntos de genero literario, identidad femenina y concientizacion por la escritura*.
- Nordau, Max. *Dégénérescence (Degeneration)*. (For context on the fin-de-siècle obsession with illness).

Additional Resources:

- Studies on the War of the Pacific (1879-1883) and its psychological impact on the Peruvian intellectual class.



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- Feminist critiques of Latin American *Modernismo* (e.g., studies on Delmira Agustini, Alfonsina Storni).

V. RELATED STOCKCERO RESOURCES

Female Emancipation & Literary Voices: 6-Book Bundle.

Other titles in the bundle: *La Emancipada*, *Una mujer de fin de siglo*, *Blanca Sol*, *Mujeres Peligrosas*, *Vida de la Madre Ines de la Encarnacion*.

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