



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (080)

TITLE: *Una mujer de fin de siglo*

AUTHOR: Maria R. Lojo

EDITOR: Malva Filer

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I. OVERVIEW & SIGNIFICANCE

Maria Rosa Lojo's *Una mujer de fin de siglo* (1999) is a masterful work of historical fiction that resurrects the marginalized figure of Eduarda Mansilla de García—a brilliant 19th-century Argentine writer, sister to Lucio V. Mansilla, and niece of the dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas. Set against the backdrop of an Argentina marching toward modernity in the post-Rosas era, the novel explores the profound personal and psychological costs of female intellectual ambition in a society dictated by rigid patriarchal norms.

Through a highly sophisticated narrative structure, Lojo intertwines historical texts (Eduarda's own writings and her son's memoirs) with fiction, dividing the novel into three distinct perspectives: Eduarda's internal voice, the observational lens of her French secretary Alice Frinet, and the affectionate memory of her son, Daniel. This edition, enriched by Dr. Malva Filer's introduction and extensive annotations, allows students to engage with the complexities of gender, identity, and the silencing of female authors. It is an indispensable text for examining how historical memory is constructed and how the female artistic vocation survived—and suffered—in 19th-century Latin America.

II. CONTEXT & CRITICAL APPROACHES

This volume provides a rich framework for exploring the fictionalization of history, the challenges of female authorship, and the transition of Argentine society in the second half of the 19th century.

Historical Fiction and National Identity:

- Analyze how Lojo reconstructs the historical period following the fall of Juan Manuel de Rosas (1852). How does Eduarda's position—caught between her Rosista bloodline and her husband's victorious anti-Rosista faction—mirror the deep political fractures of a developing Argentina?
- Discuss the process of fictionalizing historical figures. How does the novel blend factual history, archival texts (*Recuerdos de viaje*, *Creaciones*), and creative imagination to build a collective memory of the Argentine woman?

The Price of the Female Vocation:

- Examine the societal backlash against Eduarda Mansilla. How does her privileged class, beauty, and expected social role conflict with her burning desire to write and be recognized as an intellectual?
- Analyze the theme of "psychological torture" and guilt. Why did Eduarda, in her final will, request that her works not be republished? What does this reveal about the internalized oppression and the slander she faced from the literary establishment?



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Narrative Polyphony and Perspective:

- Discuss the novel's tripartite structure. How does the shift from Eduarda's own voice (Part I) to the perspective of her French secretary, Alice Frinet (Part II), alter our understanding of the protagonist's sacrifices (e.g., abandoning her husband and children to find herself)?
- Analyze the role of Daniel García Mansilla (Part III). How does the inclusion of a sympathetic male perspective, one that shares her literary sensibilities, complete the portrait of the misunderstood artist?

III. ADVANCED DISCUSSION & RESEARCH PROMPTS

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

- **The Exiled Intellect:** Eduarda spent many years in the United States and Europe accompanying her husband on diplomatic missions before returning alone to Argentina. Discuss how the experience of travel and cosmopolitanism shaped her worldview and alienated her from the conservative elite of Buenos Aires.
- **Intertextuality as a Feminist Strategy:** Lojo weaves actual texts written by Eduarda and her son directly into the fabric of the novel. Research the concept of intertextuality and discuss how Lojo uses it to "rescue" Eduarda's silenced voice from archival obscurity and give her agency within modern fiction.
- **Contrasting Siblings:** Compare the historical legacy of Eduarda Mansilla with that of her famous brother, Lucio V. Mansilla (*Una excursión a los indios ranqueles*). How did gender dictate the reception, canonization, and cultural survival of their respective literary works?
- **The Foreign Gaze:** Analyze the character of Alice Frinet. As a Frenchwoman and an employee, how does her "outsider" status allow her to perceive Eduarda's domestic and societal imprisonment more clearly than the Argentine characters?

IV. SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Text:

- Lojo, Maria R. *Una mujer de fin de siglo*. Edited by Malva Filer. Stockcero. (TK ORDER: 080)

Key Secondary Scholarship:

- Filer, Malva. Introduction and notes to *Una mujer de fin de siglo*. Stockcero.
- Mansilla, Eduarda. *Recuerdos de viaje* and *Creaciones* (Primary sources for comparative study).
- García Mansilla, Daniel. *Visto, oído y recordado* (Primary source material).
- Fletcher, Lea. *Mujeres y cultura en la Argentina del siglo XIX*.
- Masiello, Francine. *Between Civilization and Barbarism: Women, Nation, and Literary Culture in Modern Argentina*.

Additional Resources:

- Studies on the Generation of 1880 in Argentina.
- Research on the political landscape of Argentina post-Caseros (1852).
- Feminist criticism concerning the silencing of 19th-century female authors in Latin America.



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V. RELATED STOCKCERO RESOURCES

Female Emancipation & Literary Voices: 6-Book Bundle.

Other titles in the bundle: *La Emancipada*, *Blanca Sol*, *Mujeres Peligrosas*, *Vida de la Madre Ines de la Encarnacion*, *La rosa muerta*.

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