

STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (082)

TITLE: La gozadora del dolor
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EDITOR: Catharina Vallejo
ISBN: 978-987-1136-69-8
Subject Areas: 20th-Century Latin American Literature, Cuban Vanguardia & Cultural History, Radical Feminism & Gender Studies, Transatlantic Erotic Naturalism, Women's Writing

I. OVERVIEW & SIGNIFICANCE

First published in Havana in 1922, shortly after the passage of Cuba's landmark 1918 Divorce Law and on the eve of the First National Women's Congress (1923), Graziella Garbalosa's debut novel *La gozadora del dolor* remains one of the most audacious and formally subversive works of early twentieth-century Hispanic letters.

Structurally divided between the decadent, belle-époque artistic milieu of a bohemian couple—the cerebral novelist Oscar and the sensual dancer Cecilia—and the emerging urban reality of their young middle-class neighbors, the sisters Josefina and her sibling, the novel stages an uncompromising inquiry into female eroticism, bodily materiality, and patriarchal exploitation.

While Josefina embodies the aspirations of the modern Havana working woman ("Sueño con ser oficinista. Con andar cómoda y ser dueña de mis actos"), her sexual awakening—sparked by reading Musset with her sister and manipulated by Oscar's calculated literary seduction—culminates in a clinical, unflinchingly naturalist depiction of an induced abortion.

Driven by aging, betrayal, and an apocalyptic feminist consciousness, Cecilia ultimately assumes the role of a social "leveler" (niveladora), executing a murder-suicide to avenge male impunity.

Edited with a comprehensive critical introduction and notes by Catharina Vallejo, and featuring a cover detail by Cuban avant-garde illustrator C.W. Massaguer from the iconic journal *Social,* this Stockcero edition rescues a long-silenced masterpiece essential for courses on the Latin American Vanguardia, transatlantic naturalism, and the textual reclamation of the female body.

II. CONTEXT & CRITICAL APPROACHES

• Retextualizing and Reclaiming the Female Body:

Drawing on Julia Kristeva's theory of subjectivity and Catharina Vallejo's critical framework, instructors can examine how Garbalosa breaks the bourgeois taboo surrounding "respectable" women's sexuality. By depicting two sisters discovering erotic pleasure through shared reading—a doubly transgressive, incestuous and homoerotic awakening—and later confronting the brutal physical reality of clandestine abortion, Garbalosa shifts the female body from a passive object of male modernist idealization to an active, material site of pleasure, pain, and self-awareness.

• Radical 1920s Feminism and the "Mujer Niveladora":

Far removed from the conciliatory national romances studied by Doris Sommer (Foundational Fictions), *La gozadora del dolor* articulates a militant rhetoric of gender warfare. Students can analyze Cecilia's transformation from a "priestess of Desire" into

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an avenging niveladora who rejects female martyrdom, alongside the historical rise of the Club Femenino de Cuba (1918) and the Federación Nacional de Asociaciones Femeninas (1921).

• *Transatlantic Erotic Naturalism and Fin-de-Siècle Decadence:*

The novel provides a rich bridge for transatlantic literary studies, engaging both Cuban social realism (Miguel de Carrión's *Las honradas and Las impuras*) and the scandalous Spanish/Cuban erotic-naturalist tradition of Emilio Bobadilla ("Fray Candil"), Alfonso Hernández Catá, Felipe Trigo, and Eduardo Zamacois.
Unlike her male contemporaries, who often indulged in voyeuristic morbidity, Garbalosa deploys graphic naturalism to expose the reproductive and social costs borne exclusively by women.

• *Vanguardia, Self-Reflexivity, and Bohemian Networks:*

Beyond its melodramatic and naturalist extremes, the text exhibits keen avant-garde self-consciousness regarding the act of writing and reading, contrasting male textual authority (Oscar) with female corporeal performance (Cecilia).
Instructors can situate Garbalosa within the vibrant pan-American bohemian networks of Havana and Mexico City, where she collaborated in Social and Bohemia and interacted with figures such as Julio Antonio Mella, José Carlos Mariátegui (whose journal *Amauta* reviewed her work), Tina Modotti, Ernest Hemingway, and Diego Rivera.

• *Paired Pedagogical Module (Garbalosa & Ofelia Rodríguez Acosta):*

Because this Stockcero collection also includes Ofelia Rodríguez Acosta's *La Vida manda, y otros textos* (090), instructors can design an extraordinary module on 1920s Cuban feminist fiction, comparing Garbalosa's visceral, naturalist "thesis novel" with Rodríguez Acosta's socially engaged vanguardist feminism.

Classroom Discussion Questions:

• How does the act of reading erotic and romantic literature (Musset, Balzac, Blasco Ibáñez, Manon Lescaut) function within the plot both as a vehicle for female self-discovery between the two sisters and as a predatory instrument of seduction wielded by Oscar?
• In what ways does Josefina's desire to work as an independent office clerk ("ser oficinista... y ser dueña de mis actos") reflect the changing socioeconomic landscape of 1920s Havana, and why does her aspiration collide so tragically with her sexual vulnerability?
• How does Garbalosa's graphic depiction of Josefina's abortion subvert the preciosista aesthetic of Modernismo and force the reader to confront the material consequences of eroticism?
• When the Cuban philosopher Enrique José Varona read Garbalosa's work, he urged her to "restrain" her imagination yet admitted that critics would have to recognize her as "original—which is much rarer." Why was *La gozadora del dolor* virtually erased from canonical histories of Cuban literature despite Garbalosa's prominence in the 1920s avant-garde?

III. ADVANCED DISCUSSION & RESEARCH PROMPTS

• *The Politics of the Body in Cuban Naturalism:*

Write a research paper comparing the representation of female sexuality, transgression, and bodily punishment in Graziella Garbalosa's *La gozadora del dolor* (1922) with male-

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authored Cuban naturalist and erotic novels of the era, such as Miguel de Carrión's *Las honradas* (1917) or Emilio Bobadilla's *En la noche dormida* (1914).
How does female authorship alter the ideological function of naturalist shock?

• Vanguardia and Feminist Militancy in 1920s Havana (Garbalosa & Rodríguez Acosta):

Conduct a comparative study of Stockcero's critical editions of Graziella Garbalosa's *La gozadora del dolor* and Ofelia Rodríguez Acosta's *La Vida manda.*
Examine how both authors navigate the intersection of aesthetic modernity (revista *Social*, urban cosmopolitanism) and feminist activism during the turbulent administrations of Alfredo Zayas and Gerardo Machado. •

Melodrama, Irony, and the Anti-Foundational Novel:

Drawing on Rita Felski's analysis of melodramatic extremes and Doris Sommer's *Foundational Fictions*, analyze how Garbalosa uses the binary opposition between the aging bohemian couple (Oscar and Cecilia) and the young bourgeois sisters to dismantle the myth of the harmonious national family in post-independence Cuba.

IV. SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

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V. RELATED STOCKCERO RESOURCES

A comprehensive collection focusing on female protagonists, writers, and the shifting societal roles of women in Latin America. Included titles: *Sacrificio y Recompensa, Stella, La gozadora del dolor, Mecha Iturbe, Eleodora - Las consecuencias, A Dead Rose, La Vida manda, y otros textos,* and *Roque Moreno.*

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