



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (112)

TITLE: *Don Catrín de la Fachenda*

AUTHOR: José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi

ISBN: 978-1-934768-29-7

Editor: María Eugenia Mudrovcic

I. OVERVIEW & SIGNIFICANCE

Written in 1819 and published posthumously in 1832, *Don Catrín de la Fachenda* is the final, most uncompromising novel by José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi ("El Pensador Mexicano"). Set during the socioeconomic collapse of late colonial New Spain, the novel chronicles the meteoric rise and miserable fall of Don Catrín, a middle-class criollo who rejects education, familial guidance, and honest labor in favor of vanity, superficial fashion, gambling, and a lifestyle of utter parasitism.

Evolving from the traditional starving *pícaro* of the Spanish Golden Age into a precursor of the modern *dandy*, Don Catrín embodies the moral bankruptcy and social anxiety of a collapsing order. Through a sharp collision of discourses—the libertine cynicism of the protagonist versus the moralizing authority of enlightened figures like his uncle the priest, Modesto, and the Count of Tebas—Lizardi exposes the ideological tensions of a society on the verge of independence. Edited with a thorough introductory study by María Eugenia Mudrovcic, this critical edition offers an invaluable lens into the class anxieties and cultural shifts of early 19th-century Latin America.

II. CONTEXT & CRITICAL APPROACHES

This text provides an exceptional framework for examining class structures, the birth of modern subjectivity, religious ideology, and the transition from colony to republic.

From the *Pícaro* to the Colonial *Dandy*:

Examine how Lizardi reconfigures the classic picaresque model. Unlike Lázaro, whose survival is driven by literal hunger, Don Catrín is driven by an insatiable appetite for status, appearance, and ease. Discuss how his obsession with clothing, posture, and superficial elegance aligns him with the European concept of the *dandy* as analyzed by Baudelaire and Carlyle, representing a paradoxical rebellion against bourgeois work ethics and traditional noble values alike.

The Clash of Discourses (Parents vs. Friends):

Analyze the structural conflict of the novel: the ideological war between the "parents" (figures of patriarchal, religious, and civic authority representing the ideal colonial/enlightened order) and the "friends" (the network of gamblers, thieves, and libertines who shape Catrín's actual behavior). Why does the paternalistic model fail to redeem Catrín?

The Body as a Metaphor for Sociopolitical Decay:

Trace the physical degradation of the protagonist—from tailored suits and borrowed pocket watches to disease, amputation in a military hospital, poverty, and ultimate death in a prison in Havana. Discuss how Sontag's theories on illness as a metaphor apply here: Catrín's decaying body mirrors the systemic political and moral chaos of the transitioning society.



The Stockcero Guarantee

SpanishBookPress Editions.

Printed in the USA. Never backlisted. Always available.

Copyright © 2025 Stockcero, Inc

3785 N.W. 82nd Avenue, Suite 302, Miami, FL 33166, USA

Colonial Transition and Class Anxiety:

Explore the historical backdrop of early 19th-century New Spain (the Bourbon reforms, the impact of the 1804 royal decrees on mortgages, and the urban influx of the unemployed). How does Don Catrín represent the precarious, non-productive urban middle class (*pre-burguesía urbana*) caught between the rigid structures of the past and the uncertain materialist future?

III. ADVANCED DISCUSSION & RESEARCH PROMPTS

These prompts encourage deep engagement with the text, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary analysis suitable for advanced undergraduate and graduate seminars.

Choice vs. Redemption: Unlike other characters in Lizardi's works who can be reformed, Don Catrín persists in his error with full awareness and a defiant lack of remorse. Discuss why Lizardi denies his protagonist any possibility of redemption. What does this uncompromising ending reveal about the author's fear of secular modernity?

The Economy of Dispensation: Analyze how money and credit function in the novel. Catrín is "rich without income; poor without hunger." How does his parasitic handling of wealth critique the economic structures of late colonial urban centers?

The Marginal Voice of the Editor: Examine the role of the footnotes, chapter titles, and the concluding section written by the medical practitioner (*el practicante*). How do these framing devices attempt to control the reader's interpretation, and do they succeed or clash with the seductive charisma of Catrín's first-person narrative voice?

Comparative Picaresque: Compare Don Catrín with *El periquillo sarniento*. How does the tone, narrative pacing, and ultimate fate of the protagonist shift between Lizardi's first and last novels?

IV. SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

This section complements the study of *Don Catrín de la Fachenda*, providing avenues for deeper research into Lizardi's work and 19th-century Mexican cultural history.

Primary Text:

- José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi. *Don Catrín de la Fachenda*. Introduction by María Eugenia Mudrovcic. Stockcero. (TK ORDER: 112)

Key Secondary Scholarship:

- **Brushwood, John S.** *Mexico in its Novel: A Nation's Search for Identity*. University of Texas Press, 1966.
- **Franco, Jean.** *An Introduction to Spanish-American Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- **Shumway, Nicolas.** *The Invention of Argentina: Tales of a Nation in Search of a Past*. University of California Press, 1991. (Useful for comparative frameworks on nation-building and intellectual history).
- **Villoro, Luis.** *El proceso ideológico de la revolución de independencia*. UNAM, 1967.
- **Yanes, Agustín.** *Literatura mexicana XIX*. Ciudad de México: Editorial Diana, 1980.



The Stockcero Guarantee

SpanishBookPress Editions.

Printed in the USA. Never backlisted. Always available.

Copyright © 2025 Stockcero, Inc

3785 N.W. 82nd Avenue, Suite 302, Miami, FL 33166, USA

V. RELATED STOCKCERO RESOURCES

Origins, Picaresque & Costumbrismo (6-Book Bundle).

Other titles in the bundle: *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes*, *El lazarillo de ciegos caminantes*, *Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez*, *La Quijotita y su prima*, *Manuela. Novela bogotana*.

[Browse Collection](#)

Interested in adopting this text for your course?

[Request an Evaluation Copy](#)

or [Browse our Full Catalog](#)



The Stockcero Guarantee

SpanishBookPress Editions.

Printed in the USA. Never backlisted. Always available.

Copyright © 2025 Stockcero, Inc

3785 N.W. 82nd Avenue, Suite 302, Miami, FL 33166, USA