



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (113)

TITLE: *Música sentimental*

AUTHOR: Eugenio Cambaceres

EDITOR: Claude Cymerman

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I. OVERVIEW & SIGNIFICANCE

Published in 1884, Eugenio Cambaceres's *Música sentimental* is a foundational text in Argentine naturalism, appearing a year before his masterpiece *Sin rumbo*. The novel aggressively deconstructs the 19th-century Latin American elite's obsession with Paris as the epicenter of civilization. Through the figure of Pablo, an incautious and arrogant Argentine *rastacuero* (a derogatory term for wealthy, unrefined South American upstarts in Europe), Cambaceres exposes the friction between imported European sophistication and the raw reality of the South American oligarchy.

However, the novel transcends a simple transatlantic satire. It evolves into a grim, deterministic tragedy driven by disease (syphilis) and deeply subverts the romantic tropes of Alexandre Dumas's *La Dame aux Camélias*. The ex-prostitute Loulou emerges not merely as a tragic victim, but as a figure of ultimate devotion and agency, offering a surprisingly progressive defense of the female condition. Edited by the renowned Cambaceres scholar Claude Cymerman, this critical edition is essential for advanced courses exploring Latin American cosmopolitanism, naturalist aesthetics, the medicalization of narrative, and the representation of women at the *fin de siècle*.

II. CONTEXT & CRITICAL APPROACHES

This volume provides a comprehensive framework for exploring the transatlantic initiation journey, the pathological lens of naturalism, and stylistic linguistic hybridization.

The "Rastacuero" and the Cosmopolitan Illusion:

- Analyze the character of Pablo as the archetypal *rastacuero*. How does Cambaceres use this figure to critique the Argentine elite's superficial Europeanization and their failure to genuinely assimilate Parisian culture?
- Examine the dynamic between Pablo and the protagonist-narrator (who acts as a mentor). How does this relationship frame the novel as an initiation story (*Bildungsroman*) that ultimately goes terribly wrong?

Disease and Naturalist Determinism:

- Discuss the role of syphilis in the novel. How does Cambaceres shift the narrative from a social satire to a clinical, deterministic study of physical decay?
- Compare the treatment of illness here with romantic depictions of disease (like tuberculosis). How does the naturalist lens use disease as an inescapable biological punisher rather than a source of spiritual purification?

Gender, Agency, and the Subversion of the Courtesan:

- Evaluate the character of Loulou. In what ways does she echo Marguerite Gautier from *La Dame aux Camélias*, and how does Cambaceres subvert that literary model?



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- Discuss Cymerman's assertion that the novel can be read as a defense of the female condition and an expression of progressive feminism. How does Loulou's active sacrifice elevate her above the men 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.

Linguistic Hybridity:

- Cambaceres is famous for his stylistic innovations. Research and identify the mixture of academic Spanish, Argentine *criollismo* (local idioms), and Parisian salon slang (Gallicisms) in the text. How does this linguistic hybridity reflect the fragmented cultural identity of the Argentine elite?

The Clinical Gaze:

- Analyze the graphic, clinical descriptions of the final stages of syphilis. How does this uncompromising scientific objectivity relate to Cambaceres's broader aesthetic goals for Argentine literature, which scandalized contemporary critics?

The Transatlantic Mirror:

- Investigate the historical context of the Generation of 1880's travels to Europe. How does *Música sentimental* act as a distorted mirror reflecting the anxieties of a nation trying to buy its way into European modernity with agricultural wealth?

IV. SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Text:

- **Cambaceres, Eugenio.** *Música sentimental*. Edited by Claude Cymerman. SpanishBookPress. (TK ORDER: 113)

Key Secondary Scholarship & Context:

- **Cymerman, Claude.** Introduction to *Música sentimental*. Stockcero.
- **Dumas fils, Alexandre.** *La Dame aux Camélias*. (For comparative structural and thematic analysis).
- **Nouzeilles, Gabriela.** *Ficciones somáticas: naturalismo, nacionalismo y políticas médicas del cuerpo (Argentina 1880-1910)*. (Crucial for understanding disease in Argentine literature).
- **Gnutzmann, Rita.** *La novela naturalista en Argentina (1880–1900)*.
- **Salessi, Jorge.** *Médicos maleantes y maricas*. (For context on sexuality, medicine, and nation-building in Argentina).

Additional Resources:

- Historical studies on the Argentine expatriate communities in Paris during the late 19th century.
- Critical discussions on the etymology and social function of the term *rastacuero* (or *rastaquouère*) in French and Latin American contexts.



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V. RELATED STOCKCERO RESOURCES

From Costumbrismo to Naturalism: 6-Book Bundle.

Other titles in the bundle: *La Charca*, *Sin rumbo*, *A fuego lento*, *Eugenio Díaz Castro: Realismo y Socialismo en Manuela*, *El pozo del Yocci*.

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