



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (133)

TITLE: Eugenio Díaz Castro: Realismo y Socialismo en Manuela. Novela bogotana

AUTHOR: Flor María Rodríguez-Arenas

ISBN: 978-1-934768-50-1

I. OVERVIEW & SIGNIFICANCE

This volume offers a groundbreaking critical reassessment of Eugenio Díaz Castro and his magnum opus, *Manuela. Novela bogotana* (1858). For over a century, traditional literary criticism marginalized Díaz Castro, frequently dismissing him as an uneducated, naive peasant whose work was strictly limited to picturesque, superficial *costumbrismo*. In this rigorous critical study, Professor Flor María Rodríguez-Arenas thoroughly dismantles this historical bias.

Rodríguez-Arenas recontextualizes Díaz Castro as a highly conscious intellectual and a central ideologue of the influential Colombian literary circle, *El Mosaico*. She argues persuasively that *Manuela* transcends local color; instead, its structure and composition represent a sophisticated synthesis of mid-19th-century French Realism, radical liberalism, and early socialist thought. This book is an indispensable pedagogical tool for advanced seminars in Latin American literature, providing students with the critical framework necessary to read *Manuela* not as mere folklore, but as a monumental social critique exposing the poverty, crime, and systemic injustice generated by the Colombian elite.

II. CONTEXT & CRITICAL APPROACHES

This volume provides a comprehensive foundation for examining the historiography of Latin American literary criticism, the ideological functions of 19th-century realism, and the political landscape of New Granada (Colombia).

Dismantling the "Costumbrista" Myth:

- Analyze the historical reception of Eugenio Díaz Castro. Why did the intellectual elite (both his contemporaries and later critics) find it necessary to label him an "ignorant peasant" and reduce his complex narrative to simple *costumbrismo*?
- Discuss the political implications of literary canon formation. How does the classification of a text as "costumbrista" versus "realist" affect its perceived intellectual weight and sociopolitical authority?

French Realism and Early Socialism:

- Examine Rodríguez-Arenas's thesis regarding Díaz Castro's intellectual influences. How does *Manuela* adapt the tenets of French Realism (such as the focus on the lower classes and systemic social flaws) to the specific sociopolitical reality of mid-19th-century Colombia?
- Analyze the presence of early socialist thought in Díaz Castro's critique. How does the novel diagnose the inertia of the educated classes and the ambition of the wealthy as the root causes of national misery?



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The Role of *El Mosaico*:

- Discuss the significance of the literary newspaper *El Mosaico* in the formation of a national literature in Colombia. What was Díaz Castro's ideological role within this group of *letrados*?

III. ADVANCED DISCUSSION & RESEARCH PROMPTS

These prompts encourage deep engagement with the critical text, historiographical methodology, and the intersections of literature and political theory.

Re-reading *Manuela*:

- Using Rodríguez-Arenas's study as a theoretical lens, analyze specific chapters of *Manuela*. Identify passages where what appears to be "local color" is actually functioning as a vehicle for radical social critique or socialist ideology.

The Intellectual and the State:

- Research the political climate of New Granada in the 1850s, particularly the tensions between Liberals and Conservatives, and the artisan revolts. How does Rodríguez-Arenas position Díaz Castro's fiction as a direct intervention in these national debates?

Methodologies of Literary Recovery:

- Discuss the methodology employed by Rodríguez-Arenas. How does she use archival research, historical context, and close reading to rescue an author from over a century of critical misinterpretation? What does this reveal about the biases inherent in traditional literary histories?

IV. SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Text:

- **Rodríguez-Arenas, Flor María.** *Eugenio Díaz Castro: Realismo y Socialismo en Manuela*. SpanishBookPress. (TK ORDER: 133)

Key Secondary Scholarship & Context:

- **Díaz Castro, Eugenio.** *Manuela. Novela bogotana*. ([Stockcero - ISBN 978-1-934768-49-5](#)).
- **Rama, Ángel.** *La ciudad letrada* (The Lettered City). (For understanding the power dynamics of 19th-century intellectual circles like *El Mosaico*).
- **Sommer, Doris.** *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*.
- **Jaramillo Uribe, Jaime.** *El pensamiento colombiano en el siglo XIX*. (For historical context on the infiltration of socialist and liberal ideas in Colombia).

Additional Resources:

- Historical studies on the Golgota and Draconian liberal factions in 19th-century Colombia.
- Archival issues of the newspaper *El Mosaico*.



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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*, *Música sentimental*, *El pozo del Yocci*.

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