



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (147)

TITLE: *Carlos II el Hechizado*

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EDITOR: Montserrat Ribao Pereira

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I. OVERVIEW & SIGNIFICANCE

Antonio Gil y Zárate's *Carlos II el Hechizado* (1837) is a pivotal work of Spanish Romantic drama, yet it transcends mere historical reconstruction to function as a powerful political and social allegory. Premiering amidst the turbulent Carlist Wars, the play sensationally dramatizes the supposed "bewitchment" of Spain's last Habsburg king, Carlos II, who, through an alleged curse, condemns his own daughter, Inés, to the stake.

This critical edition, meticulously prepared by Montserrat Ribao Pereira, offers a unique window into 19th-century Spain. It reveals how Gil y Zárate utilized historical melodrama—complete with exorcisms, inquisitorial dungeons, popular revolts, and macabre imagery—to craft a thinly veiled liberal and anti-clerical critique of contemporary abuses of power. The play was both acclaimed and denounced for its "immorality" and "exaggerated emotionalism," reflecting the heated debates of a nation grappling with its own identity. This kit facilitates an advanced study of Romanticism as a political force, the role of theater in shaping public opinion, and the enduring tension between state and Church in Spain.

II. CONTEXT & CRITICAL APPROACHES

This volume provides a rich framework for exploring 19th-century Spanish theater, historical consciousness, and the interplay of artistic representation and political ideology.

Romantic Drama as Political Allegory:

Analyze *Carlos II el Hechizado* as a political drama. How does Gil y Zárate use the figure of the bewitched king and the events of the late 17th century to comment on the contemporary political situation in 1837 Spain (Carlist Wars, regency of María Cristina, liberal-absolutist conflict)?

Discuss the central theme of "abuse of power" stemming from both negligent governance and religious superstition. How does the play critique the interference of the Church in state affairs?

Anticlericalism and the Inquisition:

Examine the portrayal of Father Froilán Díaz and the Holy Office. How does the play expose the hypocrisy, ambition, and moral corruption within the clergy?

Discuss the dramatic function of the exorcism scene and the Auto de Fe. How do these elements contribute to the play's sensationalism while also serving its anticlerical message?

Thematic Parallels: Carlos II and Isabel II:

Analyze the critical contention that the play drew clear parallels between Carlos II and the young Isabel II (or her mother's regency). How did this contemporary resonance contribute to the play's scandalous reception and its political impact?



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Discuss the specific criticisms (e.g., "inmoralidad," "exagerado efectismo," "melodramatismo") leveled against the play by its contemporaries. How do these criticisms reflect the aesthetic and moral debates of Spanish Romanticism?

Spectacle, Stagecraft, and Audience Engagement:

Examine the detailed stage directions and the use of light, sound, and visual effects (processions, hidden figures, changing backdrops). How do these contribute to the play's "espectacularidad" and its ability to engage a diverse audience?

Discuss the contrast between scenes explicitly staged and those merely narrated (e.g., the Auto de Fe). What is the dramatic effect of this distinction?

Characterization and the Figure of the "King-Victim":

Analyze the portrayal of Carlos II as a weak, "bewitched" monarch. How does his physical and mental suffering make him a sympathetic figure while simultaneously exposing the vulnerabilities of absolute power?

Discuss the "melodramatic" function of characters like Inés and Florencio, whose love story intertwines with the political plot.

III. ADVANCED DISCUSSION & RESEARCH PROMPTS

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

Romanticism as a Political Instrument: Gil y Zárate was a prominent liberal politician and educator. Discuss how *Carlos II el Hechizado* exemplifies the use of Romantic drama as a vehicle for political commentary and reform during a period of intense social and political upheaval in Spain.

The Problem of Historical Accuracy: Analyze how Gil y Zárate takes "licencias históricas" (e.g., Inés as the king's daughter, Father Froilán's worldly ambitions) to serve the dramatic and political aims of the play. To what extent does historical accuracy matter in a Romantic drama with a clear didactic purpose?

The Power of Rumor and Superstition: The play uses the "supposed bewitchment" of the king as its central conflict. Discuss how superstition and rumors (the "hechizo") are exploited by different factions (e.g., the clergy, the nobility) to manipulate the king's will and influence political outcomes.

Melodrama and the Construction of Emotion: Analyze specific scenes in the play where melodramatic elements are prominent (e.g., Inés's plight, the king's despair). How do these elements function to evoke audience empathy and reinforce the play's moral and political messages?

The "Panteón de El Escorial" Scene: Discuss the symbolic significance of Act V, set in the Royal Pantheon at El Escorial. How does the king's meditation among the tombs of his ancestors reflect on the collapse of the Spanish monarchy and empire, and the broader questions of national destiny?

Comparative Drama: Compare the dramatic techniques and thematic concerns of *Carlos II el Hechizado* with other Romantic dramas of the period (e.g., *Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino*, *El Trovador*). How does it stand out or conform to the conventions of the genre?

The Role of the Audience: Given the play's controversial reception and its continuous revivals, discuss how the audience's engagement with the drama reflected their own political and social anxieties.



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IV. SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Text:

- Gil y Zárate, Antonio. *Carlos II el Hechizado*. Edited by Montserrat Ribao Pereira. Stockcero. (TK ORDER: 147)

Key Secondary Scholarship:

- Adams, John J. *Carlos II el Hechizado: A Historical Drama*. 1957.
- Cantero García, Antonio. *El teatro de Antonio Gil y Zárate*. 2008.
- Caldera, E. *El teatro español en el Romanticismo*. 1985.
- Gies, D.T. *The Theater in Nineteenth-Century Spain*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Graham, John. *The Spanish Stage in the 19th Century*.
- Lafuente, Modesto. *Historia General de España*. 1850-1867. (For historical account of "Los Hechizos del rey").
- Llorens, Washington. *Gil y Zárate: Vida y obra*. 1989.
- Muñoz Sempere, D. *Teatro y política en el Romanticismo español*. 2008.
- Peers, Edgar Allison. *A History of the Romantic Movement in Spain*. 1973.
- Ribao Pereira, Montserrat. Introduction to *Carlos II el Hechizado*. Stockcero.
- Rodríguez Gutiérrez, Borja. *La dramaturgia de Antonio Gil y Zárate*. 2010.

Additional Resources:

- Studies on 19th-century Spanish Romanticism and its political dimensions.
 - Research on the Carlist Wars and the regency of María Cristina.
 - History of the Spanish Inquisition and its influence.
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V. RELATED STOCKCERO RESOURCES

- [Classic Spanish Drama & Beyond: 5-Book Bundle](#).
- Other titles in the bundle: [Los engaños de un engaño](#), [Campanas a medianoche](#), [The Limping Devil – El Diablo Cojuelo](#).
- Related Golden Age authors: Luis Vélez de Guevara.

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