



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (191)

TEXT: *Maestra voluntaria*
AUTHOR: Daura Olema García
EDITOR: Barbara Riess
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I. OVERVIEW & SIGNIFICANCE

Originally published in 1962 and recipient of the *Casa de las Américas* Prize, *Maestra voluntaria* is a critical literary recovery of a work that had been out of print for decades. Based on the author's own diary during the 1961 Literacy Campaign, the novel captures the raw, immediate experience of the Cuban Revolution's early years. It is more than a historical record; it is a profound study of individual transformation, gender role shifts, and the socialization of a revolutionary consciousness. For students of Hispanic literature and culture, this edition provides a unique window into the "epopee of the moment"—the collective effort to reshape a nation's identity through literacy and social commitment.

II. CONTEXT & CRITICAL APPROACHES (by Barbara Riess)

The 1961 Context: A Year of Definitions:

Analyze the historical weight of 1961: the Literacy Campaign, the Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón) invasion, and the declaration of the socialist character of the Revolution.

Discuss how the novel operates in the "interstice" between visions of the Revolution (nationalist vs. socialist) and how these events dictate the protagonist's internal resolution.

From Poetry to Narrative: The "Bifurcated" Voice:

Explore Daura Olema's transition from an intimist, romantic poet to a narrative voice that moves from the "I" (subjective diary) to the "We" (national collective).

Examine the use of ellipsis, antithesis, and nature as a "confidant" in the protagonist's quest for a personal and political path.

Precursor to "Testimonio":

Discuss the novel's role as an early example of *testimonio* literature. How does the use of a fictionalized protagonist (Wilma) based on real-life diary entries challenge traditional boundaries between journalism, history, and fiction?

Analyze the critical reception of 1962: Why did some critics label it as "propaganda" or "didactic," while others saw it as an essential human experience of the Marxist experiment?

Gender and the Body in Olive Green:

Analyze the physical and psychological transformation of the female characters in the Sierra Maestra. Riess highlights the "female body made strong and powerful" in an environment traditionally reserved for men.



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Discuss the "momentary liberation" vs. emancipation: Did the Revolution truly transform patriarchal values, or was women's participation merely a mobilization for the defense of the state?

III. ADVANCED DISCUSSION & RESEARCH PROMPTS

Situated Knowledge vs. Ideology: Using Haraway's concept of "situated knowledge," discuss how Vilma learns "revolutionary truth" through daily struggle and solidarity rather than through theoretical doctrine.

The Power of Language: Trace the development of a new revolutionary lexicon within the novel (hymns, slogans, Martí's influence). How does this common language help forge a "revolutionary people"?

Racial and Social Consciousness: Analyze the initial "reactionary" sensitivity of the protagonist regarding race and class. How is the *concientización* of racial difference represented—or perhaps truncated—by the military mobilization?

The 2019 Epilogue: Contrast the idealistic fervor of the 1962 text with Olema's 2019 Epilogue (written shortly before her death). How does the distance of sixty years change the reading of her "absolute faith" in the process?

IV. RELATED STOCKCERO RESOURCES

- **Cuba: Revolution, Gender, and Memory Bundle:** *Maestra voluntaria, Cien botellas en una pared, Viaje a la Habana, Aponte, El Che.*

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