



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (207)

TEXT: *Montalván, la negra* (1929)

AUTHOR: Aurora Cáceres

EDITOR: Eduardo Huaytán Martínez – Andrew Reynolds

PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

(Based on the Introduction by Eduardo Huaytán Martínez and Andrew Reynolds, and critical studies of Afro-Hispanic literature)

1. AURORA CÁCERES: A PIVOTAL PERUVIAN INTELLECTUAL:

Multifaceted Pioneer:

Zoila Aurora Cáceres Moreno (1872-1958) was a fundamental figure in Peruvian and Hispano-American Modernism, recognized as a feminist activist, journalist, diplomat, and author. Her diverse body of work includes fiction, travelogues, biographies, and essays on women's history and art criticism.

"Montalván, la negra" as Revelation:

This *nouvelle*, originally published in her 1929 collection *La princesa Suma Tica*, showcases a lesser-known facet of Cáceres's writing: her deep engagement with Afro-descendant racial politics, diverging from her typical modernist prose towards a more sober realism and naturalism.

2. REINVENTING "NEGRISMO" IN LATIN AMERICAN NARRATIVE:

Breaking Paradigms:

Montalván, la negra emerges within a rich period (the 1920s) where Latin American authors explored "negritud." Unlike many "negrista" novels (written by white authors, often universalizing or exoticizing Black subjects), Cáceres's work presents Afro-descendant characters with power and insurgent attitudes, subverting the "exotic and attractive, but powerless" paradigm.

Intersection of Race and Gender:

The narrative uniquely intertwines racial issues with gender dynamics, establishing a clear genealogy with canonical Afro-Hispanic texts like *Sab*, but from a distinctly feminine locus of enunciation.

Historical Novel and Voices "from Below":

The *nouvelle* functions as a historical novel, revisiting Peruvian slavery through a fictional insurgency. It reconstructs history from the margins, from the perspective of the historically excluded and repressed, resonating with a desire to recover the past from "below."

3. MELODRAMA, MAGIC, AND INSURGENCY:

Emotional Economy of Critique:

Cáceres Moreno employs melodramatic and emotional devices (compassion, love, hatred, explicit violence) to condemn colonial slavery and racial injustice. This "affective economy" seeks to mobilize readers' empathy and political stance.



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Empowerment through Magic:

The character of Dolores, a "bruja" (witch) with a deep connection to nature, embodies a magical realism element that serves as a political device for social transformation, echoing later works like Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo*.

Subversion and Ambiguity in the Ending:

While depicting a powerful insurgency and victory for the enslaved, the novel's ending introduces complexity through the revelation of noble lineage and the "whitening" of characters, reflecting societal pressures and perhaps a nuanced critique of racial assimilation.

PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Aurora Cáceres's Feminist and Intellectual Identity:

Discuss Cáceres's role as a pioneering intellectual and feminist. How does *Montalván, la negra* reflect or extend her broader concerns regarding women's rights and social justice?

"Negrismo" and Its Subversion:

Analyze how *Montalván, la negra* engages with and potentially subverts the "negrista" literary tradition of the early 20th century. How do its Afro-descendant characters defy typical representations?

Melodrama as a Political Device:

Discuss Cáceres's use of melodramatic and emotional strategies (e.g., intense love, hatred, explicit violence) to convey her critique of colonial slavery and mobilize reader sentiment.

The Role of Magic and the Supernatural:

Examine the character of Dolores and the function of magical elements in the *nouvelle*. How is magic employed as a tool for social change and resistance?

Gender and Race in Colonial Society:

Analyze the intersection of gender and race in the novel, particularly through the alliance between Dolores and Zoraida. How does Cáceres portray violence against women in the colonial context?

The Ambiguous Ending:

Discuss the novel's ending, particularly the revelation of noble lineage and the "whitening" motif. What does this suggest about Cáceres's own views on race, identity, and social transformation, and how does it complicate the novel's insurgent message?



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PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

1. Who is the author of *Montalván, la negra*?

- A) Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda
- B) Francisco Fontanilles y Quintanilla
- C) Aurora Cáceres
- D) César Nicolás Penson

Correct Answer: C

2. *Montalván, la negra* is considered a significant work because it explores:

- A) European aristocratic life.
- B) Afro-descendant racial politics and insurgency.
- C) Pre-Columbian mythology.
- D) Modernist urban landscapes.

Correct Answer: B

3. What narrative style does Cáceres Moreno primarily use in *Montalván, la negra*, shifting from her earlier modernist works?

- A) Purely lyrical poetry
- B) Historical chronicles
- C) Realism and naturalism
- D) Science fiction

Correct Answer: C

4. The character of Dolores, a "bruja," introduces what element into the narrative as a political device?

- A) Rational debate
- B) Magical realism/supernatural power
- C) Legal reform
- D) Economic leverage

Correct Answer: B



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5. How does Montalván, *la negra* challenge traditional "negrista" novels of its period?

- A) By depicting Black characters as purely exotic.
- B) By presenting powerful and insurgent Afro-descendant characters.
- C) By focusing solely on white characters' perspectives.
- D) By avoiding themes of race altogether.

Correct Answer: B

Explore the "Afro-Hispanic & Caribbean Literature" Collection: This book is part of our comprehensive collection on the rich heritage of the African diaspora in the Hispanic world: Sab (Gómez de Avellaneda); Autonosuya (Fontanilles); Aponte (Calcagno); Cosas Añejas (Penson); and Montalván, *la negra* (Cáceres).

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