



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (089)

TEXT: *La hija del bandido, o los subterráneos del Nevado*

AUTHOR: Refugio Barragán de Toscano

EDITOR: María Zalduondo (Universidad de Louisiana, Lafayette - 2007)

PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

(Based on the Critical Introduction by Prof. María Zalduondo)

1. A PIONEERING FEMALE VOICE IN 19TH CENTURY MEXICO:

- **First Mexican Female Novelist:** Refugio Barragán de Toscano (1843-1916) holds the distinction of being the first Mexican woman to publish a novel. This achievement arose from both economic necessity and a desire to immortalize local folklore.
- **Challenging the Canon:** In a literary scene dominated by male "letrados" (men of letters) and their liberal, positivist agendas, Barragán injected her own perspective, particularly in legitimizing the role of religion and convents.

2. THE "BANDIT" NOVEL REIMAGINED:

- **Beyond the Male Gaze:** The 19th-century Mexican novel often featured bandits (*El Zarco, Los Bandidos de Río Frío*). Barragán uses this popular genre but shifts the focus from the notorious bandit (Vicente Colombo) to his daughter, María.
- **Exploring Social Impact:** Through María, the author explores the profound impact of a father's anti-social life on his daughter, portraying the struggle of women caught between societal expectations and their own desires.

3. THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH & CONVENTS:

- **A Space for Women:** Contrary to the liberal project of secularizing society and diminishing the Church's influence, Barragán's novel highlights convents as crucial alternative spaces for women who could not, or chose not to, marry. This subtly feminist stance challenges prevailing national narratives.
- **Religious Piety as Agency:** Barragán, herself deeply religious, portrays María's decision to become a Capuchin nun not as submission, but as an act of self-determination, offering her a "full and glorious life."

4. THE NARRATIVE VOICE: "THE FAIRY GODMOTHER" AUTHOR:

- **Omniscient and Maternal:** Barragán employs an omniscient narrative voice that often directly addresses the reader, blurring the lines between author and narrator. This voice frequently identifies as a "Christian mother" and even uses the archetype of the "hada madrina" (fairy godmother) to guide the story.
- **Gender Performance:** The author consciously performs her gender within the text, using traditionally "feminine" roles (mother, religious instructor) to assert her authority and legitimacy as a writer in a male-dominated literary field.



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PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

- **Gender and Genre:** How does Barragán subvert or adapt the traditional "bandit novel" genre by placing a female protagonist and a female narrative voice at its center?
- **Religion and Liberalism:** Discuss the novel's stance on the Church during Mexico's post-Independence liberal reforms. How does Barragán's portrayal of convents challenge the anti-clerical agenda of her contemporary male intellectuals?
- **Regionalism vs. Nationalism:** The novel emphasizes local settings (Ciudad Guzmán, Colima). How does this "patria chica" perspective contribute to (or diverge from) the broader national identity project of 19th-century Mexico?
- **Female Agency:** Analyze María Natividad's "actividad" and "resolución." In what ways does she challenge typical portrayals of women in 19th-century novels, and how does her ultimate choice (the convent) reflect or subvert notions of female agency?

PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- **Barragán de Toscano, Refugio.** *La hija del bandido o los subterráneos del Nevado*. Edición Crítica de María Zalduondo. Stockcero, 2007.
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- **Franco, Jean.** *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico*. Columbia University Press, 1989.
- **Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar.** *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Yale University Press, 1979.



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PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

1. What is Refugio Barragán de Toscano primarily known for?

- A) Being a famous politician in 19th-century Mexico.
- B) Being the first Mexican woman to publish a novel.
- C) Her avant-garde poetry.
- D) Her critiques of the Catholic Church.

Correct Answer: B

2. Which literary genre does *La hija del bandido* primarily belong to?

- A) Science Fiction
- B) Detective Novel
- C) Adventure Novel
- D) Psychological Thriller

Correct Answer: C

3. What specific role do convents play in Barragán's novel?

- A) They are centers of political conspiracy.
- B) They are presented as oppressive institutions.
- C) They serve as a legitimate refuge and alternative space for unmarried women.
- D) They are the main setting for bandit hideouts.

Correct Answer: C

4. What unique characteristic does the narrator of *La hija del bandido* exhibit?

- A) The narrator is unnamed and silent.
- B) The narrator is a male bandit.
- C) The narrator directly addresses the readers and identifies as a Christian mother/fairy godmother.
- D) The narrator is an indigenous character.

Correct Answer: C

5. How does the novel depict the protagonist, María Natividad?

- A) As a weak woman at the mercy of her destiny.
- B) As a villain who aids her bandit father.
- C) As a subject capable of action and deciding her own future.
- D) As a tragic figure unable to escape her fate.

Correct Answer: C

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