
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Gabriela Mistral: Nourished by and Constructed from the Sap and Blood of Life*

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| ABSTRACT

Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957) was the first Latin American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature and was a mentor to Pablo Neruda who also went on to become a Nobel laureate, yet Mistral's work is rarely studied in English translation today. This article aims to bring attention to the author's life and legacy, particularly through her diplomatic work and writing, with an emphasis on Mistral's poetry in the hope of returning Gabriela Mistral to a place of distinction and standing that encourages future reading and study. Illustrative of the author's voice, excerpts of Mistral's work are woven throughout. The article traces key moments in Mistral's life from childhood in the Elqui Valley of Chile through her years as a rural schoolteacher and onward to her position as a leader in education reform in Mexico. Through both her writing and diplomatic work, Mistral gained worldwide prominence. Her work through the League of Nations demonstrated an ongoing concern for human rights and especially for the rights of children and women in poverty and in the workplace. She was instrumental in the founding of the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and an advocate for writers and artists and their crucial role in illuminating important societal issues. The article highlights Mistral's 1937 talk before the Committee on Letters and Arts in Paris and addresses her connection with Pablo Neruda and the story of Juan Miguel, whom she adopted and called Yin-Yin; Yin-Yin died tragically at age seventeen. Finally, the article provides an overview of the life influences, themes, and timing of each of Mistral's four major collections of poetry in their English translation by Doris Dana (1971): *Desolation* (1922), *Tenderness* (1924), *Felling* (1938) and *Wine Press* (1954).

| KEYWORDS

Gabriela Mistral, Chilean poets, Latin American poets, Nobel Prize for Literature, Pablo Neruda

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1. Introduction

"As a teacher she belonged to Chile. As a poet, diplomat and an intellectual, she belonged to the world. But her desire was always to help the most vulnerable of all, the children of the world, the children of Montegrande, and the children of Elqui Valley."
(Cerda, 2016, n.p.)

In 1945 Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957) became the first Latin American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. She was a mentor to Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) who also went on to become a Nobel laureate. According to Agosin (2003):

Her name is perhaps best known to children in cosmopolitan centers of the Americas, such as Santiago, Buenos Aires, or Mexico City, as well as the rural village and distant territories of Patagonia. Most adults in Latin America grew up with an image of Mistral that changed continually depending on current interpretations of history or the memory of the people. Her image fluctuated from that of a devoted rural teacher to that of a passionate advocate for human rights. (p. xi)

Though known foremost for her poetry, Mistral's writing spans multiple genres to include poetry, fables, essays, speeches, letters and literary criticism. While it is easy to find Gabriela Mistral's works in Spanish, it can be difficult to find her works in English.

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School children in countries across South America learn the poems of Mistral and can readily recite them; they are an integral part of education, and the lyric nature of many makes them easy to memorize and turn into songs kids might recite on a playground. According to Emma Sepulveda (2003) "All of Chile's children ... had to memorize some of Mistral's poems and recite them during school events..." (p. 250). Mistral was a teacher, poet, and diplomat who lived on three continents, served in the League of Nations with Marie Curie, and held visiting professorships at Barnard, Middlebury, and Vassar Colleges. While Mistral was world renown in her lifetime, her works seem to have fallen away with time. According to Giachetti (1993) "Her prose is hardly known outside of Chile, and few books are dedicated to her work" (p. 22). In the introduction to *Selected Poems of Gabriela Mistral* (2003), Ursula K. Le Guin reflects on this, particularly in relation to Chilean poet and former student of Mistral's, Pablo Neruda. Le Guin writes:

Poetry is likely to suffer an eclipse after a poet's death. Men survive it much more than women. Not only the sentimental caricaturing of Mistral but also the bright fame of Pablo Neruda may have deepened the shadow on her. To those who see art as a competition and greatness as a masculine preserve, Mistral might well appear as a threat to Neruda, not least because he learned so much from her. In fact their differences and likenesses are fascinating. His flamboyance, her sobriety; his enthusiastic party politics, her fierce independence... Their background in village poverty, their cosmopolitan lives... Neither diminishes the other. They are two of the great twentieth-century poets. The beautiful "land on the edge of the world" that both should take pride in. (p. xxi)

Giachetti further noted that Mistral's one hundredth birthday was commemorated in 1989 by only a small celebration in Santiago. Giachetti speculates that "the male-dominated press has tended to regard her work as that of an eccentric feminist," putting her out of favor to some (p. 22). Important here is that Mistral is a poet worth knowing, worth reading and teaching – for the way she invested her life and for all that flows through her poetry. It was Mistral's commitment to social justice that made her so popular in Latin America and the Spanish speaking world. As Le Guin so artfully states, "It is the gift she has for embodying her philosophy of life in the most directly emotional and physical poems imaginable that attracts so many people to her work. [Mistral is] an emphatic and clear-headed religious poet, working from a cultural tradition foreign to most North Americans" (p. xv). Le Guin goes on to say Mistral's poetry has the "harsh beauty and unselfconscious candor of someone who identified all her life with the poor and outcast of the world. Her poems of death speak so intimately to almost everyone because they are poems of ultimate alienation which no human can leave this life without experiencing" (p. xv).

In the past fifty years, there have been just three English translations of Mistral's four major poetry collections: *Desolation* (1922), *Tenderness* (1924), *Felling* (1938) and *Wine Press* (1954). None of the English translations represent Mistral's complete works for any of the four volumes; all are selections from. Prior to Giachetti's *Gabriela Mistral: A Reader* (1993), there existed just two collections of Mistral's poetry translated to English, one by Langston Hughes in 1957 and one by Doris Dana in 1971. "Despite the fact that Gabriel Mistral lived many years in the United States, the fact that [*Desolation*] was published in the states, and many of her unedited documents, letters, and personal papers belong to the Barnard College library, her work is practically unknown [in the United States]" (Giachetti, 1993, p. 22). Two English translations have emerged since Giachetti's: *Gabriela Mistral: Selected Prose and Prose Poems* (2002) translated by Stephen Tapscott, and *Selected Poems of Gabriela Mistral* (2011) translated by Ursula Le Guin. Worth noting is that Tapscott's volume, being a balance of prose and poetry, includes selections from only one of Mistral's four major collections of poems. By shedding light on the fascinating life and writings of Gabriela Mistral, this article aims to pique reader interest and contribute positively to the resurgence of interest in her writing, particularly in her poetry as it may be read, studied, and enjoyed in college poetry and global literature courses.

Mistral's passion was tending to the needs of the poor and disenfranchised. She was a champion for human rights, particularly the rights of children and women in the areas of education and work. She was also a spokesperson for the artist, herself experiencing writing as a kind of calling through which she could affect social change. This article will present an overview of key elements of Mistral's life and work, interweaving passages of her poetry that are illustrative of her life experience, emotional depth and chief humanitarian aims. The article begins with a focus on Mistral's early years, teaching, and initial publications. The article will then examine Mistral's prominence as she rose to the international stage both as a poet and diplomat. Next, the article will touch upon Mistral's view of the role of the poet in society. And finally, the article will provide an overview of Mistral's four main collections of poetry. To maintain consistency, this article will use Doris Dana's (1971) English translation of the titles for each of the collections: *Desolacion* becomes *Desolation*; *Tenura* becomes *Tenderness*; *Tala* becomes *Felling*, as in the felling of trees, and *Lagar* becomes *Wine Press*.

2. Early Years: The Elqui Valley, Teaching, and First Publications

Born in 1889 into a poor family who lived in a rural area about 500 miles from the Chile's capital city Santiago, Gabriela Mistral's given name from birth was Lucila Godoy Alcayaga. Her family's home was in the Elqui Valley of Montegrande, a small village in the Andes mountains, surrounded by nature. Mistral's father was a teacher and her mother a seamstress (Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 3). Her father abandoned the family when Mistral was only three years old (Gazarian-Gautier, p. 6). Mistral had one sister, Emelina,

who was fifteen years her elder and served as her main teacher (Gazarian-Gautier, p. 7). Mistral herself became a teacher at the age of fifteen, something that is hard to imagine in 2024, but this was not uncommon, especially in the poor and rural areas of Chile in the early 1900s (Giachetti, p. 18). For a short period of time Mistral attended the local school in her native village, but after she was wrongfully accused of stealing and was humiliated for this in front of her classmates she never returned (Tapscott, 2002, p. ix).

Mistral's development as a teacher and a writer happened simultaneously. It was in 1904 when Gabriela was fourteen that she became aware of her desire to write. While she was teaching elementary school near her hometown, she began to write prose that was published in local papers, *La Voz de Elqui* and *El Coquimbo* (Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 13). At age fifteen, she had been granted a position in a Normal School (Teachers College) and then denied admission without explanation. There is speculation that the school's chaplain found out about the "romantic elements... [that] appeared somewhat revolutionary" in Gabriela's writing, even though she was writing under pseudonyms "Alguein" (Someone), "Soledad" (Solitude), or "Alma" (Soul), that caused the sudden change (Gazarian-Gautier, p. 13). Unable to secure formal education to be a teacher, Mistral pursued teaching through an independent apprenticeship path gained through practical experience. In 1905 Mistral secured her first full time teaching position at an impoverished rural school where she taught children during the day and workers at night (Gazarian-Gautier, p. 13).

In 1907 Mistral was transferred to a school in another small village, La Cantera. It was here that she met Romelio Ureta, an employee in the local railroad for whom she professed a "profound spiritual affection" (Tapscott, 2002, p. ix). (Gazarian-Gutier, 1975, p. 14). According to Gazarian-Gutier, Romelio committed suicide on November 25, 1909, when he was in Coquimbo and Mistral was in Santiago. "He killed himself in despair at not being able to replace a sum of money he had taken from his company for his friend" (p. 14). Gazarian-Gutier speculates that because Ureta's body was found with an old card from Mistral and because of Mistral's passionate sonnets about suicide, "a legend was woven around their names" (p. 14-15). The following three stanzas of the ten-stanza poem "The Useless Wait" (Dana, p. 9) are illustrative of grief and loss in Mistral's first collection, *Desolation*.

Night spread out its pool
of black pitch; the sorcerer
owl scraped the path with the silken
horror of its wing.

I shall not cry out to you again
since you no longer walk abroad.
My naked foot must travel on,
yours is forever still.

In vain I kept this appointment
on deserted paths.
I cannot bring to life again
your ghosts in my open empty arms.

Similarly, the last three stanzas of the five-stanza poem, "To See Him Again" (Dana, p. 15) are illustrative of suicide found in the same collection. The questions in these excerpts are a continuation of the one posed in the first line of the poem, "And shall it never be again, never?"

Never, beneath the entangled tresses of the forest
where, calling out to him, night descended on me?
Nor in the cavern that returns my echoing outcry?

Oh, no! Just to see him again, no matter where—
in little patches of sky or in the seething vortex,
beneath placid moons or in a livid horror!
And, together with him, to be all springtimes
and all winters, entwined in one anguishes knot
around his blood-stained neck!

In 1910 Mistral was able to take the Teacher Exam in Santiago, which she passed, despite having no formal training. This enabled her to move from teaching primary school to secondary school. Through her teaching, Mistral developed a real love and fondness for children, a thread woven across her poems and personal investment and caring seen throughout her life. In "We Want to Be

Queens," Lucila is Mistral herself and the other three little girls are her childhood companions (Dana, 1971, p. 89). The following lines excerpted from the poem demonstrate Mistral's playful nature and connection with children.

We were all to be queens
of four kingdoms on the sea;
Efigenia with Soledad,
and Lucila with Rosali.

In the Valley of Elqui, encircled
by a hundred mountains or more
...

With our braids of seven-year-olds
and bright aprons of percale,
chasing flights or thrushes
among the shadows of vine and grape.
...

We would wed four husbands
at the time when we should wed,
and they would all be kings and poets
...

Mistral's fondness for children also comes through the maternal nature of her poems. An example of this is in her short poem "Rocking" (Dana, 1971, p. 43). The poem is illustrative not only of the theme of motherhood that comes through many of Mistral's works, but also of nature and the divine.

The sea rocks her thousands of waves.
The sea is divine.
Hearing the loving sea
I rock my son.

The wind wandering by night
rocks the wheat.
Hearing the loving wind
I rock my son.

God, the Father, soundlessly rocks
His thousands of worlds.
Feeling His hand in the shadow
I rock my son.

Though never married or having children of her own, Mistral had a profoundly maternal nature which come through in her writing as well as her teaching. Mistral's teacher self comes through in "The Teacher's Prayer," (Dana, 1971, p. 23) from which the following stanza is excerpted.

Let me be more maternal than a mother; able to love and defend
with all of a mother's fervor the child that is not flesh of my flesh.
Grant that I may be successful in molding one of my pupils into
a perfect poem, and let me leave within her my deepest-felt melody
that she may sing for you when my lips shall sing no more.

In 1912 Mistral was granted the position "Head Inspection and Professor of history, geography, and Spanish at the Public High School for Girls in Los Andes, a post she held until 1918" (Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 17). Throughout this time she continued to write extensively. She quickly gained notoriety and pursued writing more fully. In 1913 a collection of her work was published in a Paris magazine, *Elegancias* (Gazarian-Gautier, p. 19). It was just a year later in 1914 that Mistral's literary fame took off when, writing under the pseudonym Gabriela Mistral, she was awarded first prize in a national poetry contest in Santiago for the "Sonnets on

Death" (Dana, 1971, p. xvii). Poems from "Sonnets of Death" became part of Mistral's first book of poetry, *Desolation*, which will be discussed more later in this article. As mentioned, Mistral's given name was Lucila Godoy Alcayaga. It was early in Lucila's writing for publication that she chose the name Gabriela Mistral. Depending on sources, this pseudonym stems from her two favorite writers, the Italian poet Gabriel D'Annunzio who lived from 1863-1938 and the French poet Federico Mistral who lived from 1830-1914 and/or from various sources, including the archangel Gabriel, the warm 'mistral' wind of the Mediterranean (Cerda, 2016, n.p.; Tapscott, 2002, p. ix). While Gabriel D'Annunzio and Federico Mistral were older than Gabriela Mistral, they were contemporaries, so reading them would have been reading popular poets of her day.

Mistral's writing and teaching grew side by side. In 1918, Mistral was appointed principal of the Public High School for Girls in Punta Arenas (Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 27). Of her years of teaching in numerous rural villages and cities in Chile, Mistral said: "I have traveled through the most beloved region of my land, through Patagonia. Near the Antarctic, the climate is rough, it is cold, but the people are very warm and kind. I always remember this land with fondness in spite of the fact that it is there that I acquired this tremendous rheumatism that comes back every year" (Castro, 1953, in Gazarian-Gautier, p. 27).

In 1920 at the age of 31 Mistral was transferred to Santiago as the first principal, the highest position in the secondary-school system, of Public High School No. 6 in Temuco. "For this school she composed eighteen maxims which present the rules of conduct that she felt should guide teachers and her religious missionary-like concept of teaching. Following are nine of the eighteen precepts as translated by Gazarian-Gautier, 1971, pp. 29-30):

1. Everything for the school; very little for ourselves.
2. To teach always: in the courtyard and in the street as well as in the classroom. To teach with one's bearing, one's actions, and one's words.
-
5. It is necessary to live up to one's position each day. To be occasionally skillful is not enough.
6. One should not be afraid to correct. The worst teacher is he who knows fear.
7. Everything can be said: but the right words should be sought. The most severe reprimand can be made without humiliating and poisoning the soul.
8. The teaching of children is perhaps the highest form of seeking God; but it is also the most frightening because of its tremendous responsibility.
9. It is as dangerous for the superficial teacher to chat with her pupil as it is beautiful for the teacher who has something to offer her pupil to continue her lesson outside of the classroom.
- ...
17. Beauty can be found in every lesson.
18. There is nothing sadder than for the student to realize that the class lecture is the equivalent of his text book.

As eloquently stated by literary critic Gaston Figueria (1952 in Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 30), Mistral "put her trust and her hope in children, for she believed that through them the world could become purer." In her own words Mistral said that children are "the expression of my faith in a better and more just world than ours." (Gazarian-Gautier, p. 30).

Also noteworthy, while serving as principal school in Temuco Girls' School, Mistral met Pablo Neruda who was a student at Temuco Boys' School. Mistral was fifteen years Neruda's senior and became a mentor to him. Although Neruda's own father discouraged his pursuit of writing, Mistral encouraged it. The sixteen-year-old Neruda was then president of the Temuco Literary Club and frequently visited Mistral" (Dana, 1971, p. xviii; Giachetti, 1993, p. 18). The two maintained a friendship throughout their lives.

Over a period of twenty years, Mistral taught in over a dozen cities in Chile before leaving the country for the first time and going to Mexico in 1922 (Dana, 1971, p. xii). She had been officially invited by Mexican Minister of Education, Jose Vasconcelos to come to his country to collaborate with him "in carrying out an ambitious program of educational reform, including the teaching of Indian adults and children in isolated rural areas" (Dana, p. xii). "As she had dedicated herself to the children of Chile, so did she

give herself to the cause of the Indian, crossing the Mexican Plateau on horseback and reaching the most inaccessible villages" (Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 35).

3. Prominence: International Roles, Acclaim, and Coming to Rest in Montegrando

It has been said of Mistral that she was "a perpetual voyager, a courageous traveler" (Agosin, 2003, p. xi). For the three and a half decades of her life since leaving Chile in 1922, Mistral's journey was one of growing international prominence that opened doors for her to serve as a diplomat and speak about the issues most important to her. Invited by the President of Mexico to serve as a consultant on a national program for literacy and education reform, Mistral lived in Mexico from 1922-1925. During that time she also traveled to the United States and Europe. Recognized for her poetry and advocacy for education reform, in 1925, Mistral was named Chilean delegate to the League of Nations (Dana, 1971, p. x). The League of Nations which existed from 1920-1946 and was considered to be the predecessor to the United Nations, with the expressed aim to promote international cooperation to achieve international peace and security ("The League of Nations," 2024). Interestingly, Marie Curie had also been appointed to the League of Nations (1922), and Mistral and Curie worked together on the International Committee on Intellectual Collaboration. As a reminder, Maria Salomea Skłodowska-Curie (1867-1934) was the Polish-French physicist and chemist known for discovering radium and polonium and her major contributions to finding treatments for cancer. This brings to mind a somewhat humorous or at least unexpected exchange between Mistral and a young boy reported in Gazarian-Gautier, 1975). On one occasion, "a little boy unexpectedly asked [Mistral] how she found her vocation. Mistral's answer, just as unexpected was: 'My little one ... I have missed my true calling ... I would have like to become a chemist.' She was attracted to what was concrete, what was real" (p. 103).

From 1927-1935 Mistral served as Chilean consul in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Guatemala (Dana, 1971, p. x). It was during this period, in 1929, when Mistral was living in France and serving in the United Nations, that she experienced one of the great losses of her life. Mistral's mother passed at 84. Grieving over her mother's death, Mistral, in a letter to her friend Ida Corbac, wrote: "My mother was for me a presence that sustained me. I almost never lived with her because of her attachment to La Serena [Chile]; but she was my reason for being alive" (Gazarian-Gautier, p. 46). A Christian who believed in eternal life and thus that she would be reacquainted with her mother, following is an excerpt from Gazarian-Gautier's translation of "The Death of My Mother" which appeared in Mistral's third collection of poems, *Felling*, published in 1938. These lines reflect Mistral's vision of her mother.

Oh mother, in my dreams
I walk through tortuous landscapes.
I climb a dark mountain
beyond which there always is outlined another
where undefined you stand,
but there is still another mount to overcome
to make my way
to the mountain of my rejoicing with you.

Mistral also wrote about her mother in her last collection of poems, *Wine Press* (1954) where she sings of her love to her mother as her "most faithful and most loved being." Following is an excerpt from "My Mother" as translated by Gazarian-Gautier (p. 47).

My mother was very tiny
like mint or herbs
she hardly cast a shadow
upon things, hardly,
and the earth loved her
because of her being so light
and because she smiles at it
when happy and when sad.
Children were fond of her,
so were the old, so was the grass
so was the light that looks for gracefulness,
loves it, and courts it.

As Chilean consul, Mistral was in Portugal during the Spanish Civil War which began July 17, 1936 and ended April 1, 1939. The war caused Mistral considerable heartache, particularly as she thought of the many innocents who were injured and killed. In a 1938 interview, Mistral said, "From Portugal, I have felt as a personal hurt the tragedy of Spain. I did not sleep many times thinking about the suffering of its people. I overheard the battering noise of the bombardment. I imagined the terror of the defenseless inhabitants and it grieved me" (Gazarian-Guttier, 1975, p. 57). Apart from visits to Uruguay and Argentina in 1938, Mistral was in

Europe for the duration of the Spanish Civil War. During this period living in Europe, Mistral wrote most of the poems that turned into her third book, *Felling* (1938), like the feeling of trees. *Felling* was published by Sur, the literary periodical edited by Mistral's long-term friend Victoria Ocampo. Ocampo was an Argentinian writer and intellectual who was well known for being an advocate for other writers. As a side note, *This America of Our: The Letters of Gabriela Mistral and Victoria Ocampo* (Horan & Meyer, 2003) is a fascinating and worthwhile read as the letter format conveys Mistral's very personal voice, love, and concern for others. The letters exude passion, reveal personal details about the people most important to the writers, convey their thoughts on womanhood and aging, address concerns over fascism and war, and underscore their investments in writing, publishing, and mentoring. Mistral was concerned for the fate of Spain, something perhaps best expressed by her act of generosity and love when in 1938 she turned over the proceeds of her book *Felling* to a hostel for orphans of the Spanish Civil War (Gazarian-Gutier, 1975, p. 57; Dana, 1971, p. x).

Two years after the publication of *Felling*, in May 1940, just weeks before the fall of France to the Germans during World War II, Mistral requested to be transferred to Brazil (Couch, 2008, p. 14; Gazarian-Gutier, 1975, p. 69). Besides being concerned for her own safety, Mistral was concerned for the safety of her nephew Juan-Miguel whom she adopted and affectionately called Yin-Yin. How this adoption came to be and more about Yin-Yin will be addressed later in the article in the discussion of Mistral's fourth major collection of poems, *Wine Press* (1954). From 1940-1945 Mistral retired herself from official consul work, though she "took an active part in the cause of the Allies, corresponded with Brazilian war proteges, fought against fascism, against hatred and oppression of the Jews, and wrote poetry" (Gazarian-Gautier, p. 71). Mistral herself claimed Jewish roots through her paternal grandmother and Basque, Indian, and mestizo lineage from her mother (Tapscott, 2002, p. ix). An example of her work from this time period is the following excerpt from her poem "The Immigrant Jew," as translated by Gazarian-Gautier (pp. 71-72).

I am one looking back,
I am another facing the sea.
In my head farewells are throbbing,
and my heart is filled with anguish.
The rushing waters of my village
no longer speak my name in their froth
and my traces are erased from my land and
from the air
like steps on the sand.

In 1945 Mistral received her greatest literary acclaim as she became the first Latin American and fifth female to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. To this day she is the only Latin American woman to have won this award. She was awarded the Nobel "for the lyricism fired by powerful sentiment that has made the name of this poet the symbol of idealism in the Latin American World" (Dana, 1971, p. 123). Of Mistral's work, Pablo Neruda said:

This mother without children seems to be the mother of every Chilean; her voice has questioned and praised all our native soil, from the cold forest range to the land of nitrate and copper. She has praised one by one the resources of Chile, from the impetuous Pacific Ocean to the leaves of the last southern trees. The small deeds and the small lives of Chile, stones and men, grains and flowers, snow and poetry have been praised by her very deep voice. She herself is like a part of our geography, regal and earthly, giving and mysterious. (Garazian-Gautier, 1975, p. 82)

In 1945, just after receiving the Nobel Prize, Mistral was appointed delegate to the United Nations and moved to San Francisco. As a delegate she played a key role in the founding of the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 89). Core to much of Mistral's diplomatic and literary work was the imperative that all children should have their basic needs met for food, clothing, and shelter as well as access and opportunity for a good education. This made Mistral an ideal spokesperson for the first worldwide appeal for funds for the poor children of the world. Between 1945-1953 Mistral served as Chilean consul in Los Angeles, Miami, and Long Island. Specifically, from March 16 to April 3, 1953, she served as the Chilean delegate to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (Gazarian-Gutier, p. 94). A year later, in 1954, her final collection of poems, *Wine Press*, was published.

In keeping with Mistral's longstanding reputation for speaking out on behalf of those most in need, "on December 10, 1955, [Mistral] was invited to participate in the concert held in honor of the seventh anniversary of the Proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the United Nations" (Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 102). Following is an excerpt from her speech:

We of the present day who are weary of this long waiting, who are unwilling to continue to live as privileged beings, will pursue this campaign. In no sacred writings is there anything resembling privilege, still less discrimination, two things that

humiliate and insult the human person. I should be happy if your noble effort to secure human rights were taken up in complete good faith by every nation in the world. That would be a triumph transcending everything achieved in our time. ("Message from Gabriela Mistral")

From 1914 when Mistral was awarded the top Chilean prize for poetry, the National Flower Award, onward, Mistral had lived on three continents and served as Chilean consul in nearly a dozen major cities in the United States and Europe. She received numerous honors and was invited to deliver keynote addresses around the world. Throughout her life, she never lost touch of the Elqui Valley and her concern for the poor and disenfranchised. Her roots in Montegrando had a lasting impact as she stated, "I was brought up in the country until the age of twelve. The rural life has persisted in me and I continue to take an interest in country schools and even in agrarian matters" (Gazarian-Gutier, 1975, p. 14). At the invitation of President Carlos Ibanez, in 1954, forty years after Mistral won her first national award and over thirty years since she left Chile never to live there again, she made her last visit to the country of her birth. Two hundred thousand people gathered before the presidential palace in Santiago to hear her speak. For Gabriela the highlight of the visit was the occasion on which forty-five thousand children assembled in the national stadium, sang the lyrics of her "Children's Poems" (Dana, 1971, p. 123). Less than two years later and a few weeks before her death in 1957, Mistral made her last public appearance. Fittingly this was at a high school on Long Island, where she gave an informal talk to the American children who were learning Spanish (Dana, p. 123). Despite, or perhaps resulting from her global prominence as a diplomat and writer, and reflective of her personal generosity, care for children, and love of her native village, Mistral's will made two requests: first, that a portion of her royalties go to the children of Montegrando, and second, that she be buried there. "She hoped that... the children of this poor and isolated mountain hamlet might never be forgotten by her country. For all her years of wandering and life in other lands, Gabriela never really left her beloved valley of Elqui and Montegrando where she now rests" (Dana, p. 123). Reflecting this theme, Dana's translation of Mistral's own words follows (p. 123).

I have all that I lost
and I go carrying my childhood
like a favorite flower
that perfumes my hand.

4. The Role of the Poet and Support for Artists

Mistral used her influence not only to promote human rights but also to support artists. In 1937 Mistral was invited to deliver a literary talk before the Committee on Letters and Arts in Paris. Mistral used this opportunity to speak about the economic situation of the American writer and the difficult struggle of the poet. She encouraged the audience to consider the unique and "very special position" of poets in society (Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 59). "The poet is a human being separated from the rest of mankind. He is the most helpful of creatures in his struggle for life. It is very seldom that poets are capable of doing something else to earn a living, and besides, I believe that poets are right in not wanting anything else." Mistral went on to ask what "we," society, can do for poets. In this same speech, eight years before winning the Nobel Prize for Literature, Mistral asked the Committee on Letters and Arts whether they would consider creating an international prize for poetry, in particular. Mistral stated, "No one thinks about poetry. Even among our people who are very sensitive and fond of poetry, when we contemplate the distribution of prizes, we always think of the novel and the theater, but never think of poetry..." She went on to say, "Indeed, poetry is held in great esteem by everyone, but it is also easily forsaken by all. This is a sad reality. One values poets and at the same time looks down on them; we carry this position so far that we find it odd to protect them, for down deep in ourselves we believe that poetry, just as the sun or the rain, should be some kind of gratuitous and God-sent gift" (Gazarian-Gautier, p. 59).

Mistral held the belief that the poet is a worker who has a duty to perform (Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 66). As Gazarian-Gutier notes, Mistral "knew the just balance between form and content" and did not see style as "an end in itself" (p. 90). While many of her poems convey beauty through nature, love, and motherhood, many of Mistral's poems were written "with the purpose of bringing about reforms, or ameliorating man's lot" (Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 90) Gianchetti (1993) asserts that Mistral knew how to "manipulate her own image" in a way that made her more appealing to the public (p. 20). Gianchetta posits that Mistral

[concealed] rebellion under the mask of the rural schoolteacher to create through her poetry a strong identity as a teacher, the traditional image of one who shares knowledge with others. But behind that image was the daring poet: the innovator was the teacher who refused to be authoritarian and the one who chose her identity and voice, bonding herself with children, with women, with the humble, and with social action. (p. 20)

Mistral's good friend Palma Guillen likened Mistral's writing to how the Romantics used literature as a "social weapon" (Gazarian-Gautier, p. 90). In terms of issues and causes, the chief concerns expressed across Mistral's personal letters, public speeches, and published prose were the social status of Chilean women and children, the problems of education, and the struggle facing the

young Chilean writers. She was also very much interested in literary societies and clubs to help the development of writers (Gazarian-Gautier, p. 90).

Mistral's epitaph provides additional insight as to how she viewed the role of the poet, writer, artist. The inscription reads, "what the soul is to the body, so the artist is to the people" (Gianchetti, 1993, p. 19). The significance here is that while Gabriela Mistral was a famous and very successful writer and educator who spent significant portions of her life in Europe and the United States, teaching at four different universities (Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 50) in the United States and granted honorary degrees from many U. S. universities including honorary doctorates from Columbia University, University of Florence, and University of Chile, her purpose in writing was not to leave readers with entertainment or simple romantic love poems (Gazarian-Gautier, pp. 50, 85, 97, 99-100). While clearly Mistral's life and writing show that she loved deeply, she saw her work as a kind of social activism to raise public awareness for issues such as child poverty, education, and a care for the disenfranchised not only of Chile, but of the world. Palma Guillen who was a personal friend of Mistral's posits that a primary reason for the immense popularity of Mistral's works is that her work was so relatable, that in its intensity in grappling with issues of war, death, hunger, grief, suffering, and suicide, it spoke to the human heart. To use Guillen's words, Mistral's work was "nourished by and constructed from the sap and blood of life. Attentive to the appeal of all who suffer pain, quick to defend all who suffer injustice, Gabriela belonged to those humanists who regard literature as service" (Dana, 1971, 121). Mistral wove her own early and sustained life experiences, especially some of the most difficult ones that touched upon hardship, grief, loss, and alienation, into a sense of life purpose devoted to using the arts to address human needs. Along the way she most certainly includes beauty in nature and relationships, particularly mother to child, in ways that capture readers' attention and make them pause, think, consider and feel.

Closing this section on the role of the poet and support for artists are five of the ten elements from Mistral's "Decalogue of an Artist" which appeared in her first collection, *Desolation* (Dana, 1922, p. 37). These five commandments illuminate Mistral's view of the artist's station, purpose, and manner.

- II. There is no godless art. Although you love not the Creator, you shall bear witness to Him creating His likeness.
- III. You shall create beauty not to excite the senses but to give sustenance to the soul.
- VII. The beauty you create shall be known as compassion and shall console the hearts of men.
- VIII. You shall bring forth your work as a mother brings forth her child: out of the blood of your heart.
- IX. Each act of creation shall leave you humble, for it is never as great as your dream and always inferior to that most marvelous dream of God which is nature.

5. Mistral's Four Major Poetry Collections

While Mistral's writing included fables, essays, speeches, letters and literary criticism, she is predominantly known, particularly in English translation, for her four major collections of poetry: *Desolation* (1922), *Tenderness* (1924), *Felling* (1938), and *Wine Press* (1954). This section provides an overview of each of the collections, its themes, and the backdrop of Mistral's life at the time each was published. As a point of emphasis, the overview of the fourth collection is informative of Mistral's nephew, Juan Miguel, whom she adopted and whose suicide left Mistral with deep grief.

5.1 *Desolation* (1922)

Mistral's first collection of poems, *Desolation*, was published in 1922. While predominantly comprised of poems, *Desolation* also includes several works of prose—some allegorical and others lyrical. "Decalogue of the Artist," noted in the previous section of this article is an example of Mistral's lyrical prose that expresses her beliefs and ideals about writers. The subject matter of *Desolation* reflects the vast, at times lonely landscape of the high Andean mountains and villages where Mistral grew up in the Valley of Elqui and the remote desolate towns of Patagonia where she spent part of her early teaching career. Illustrative of the "lonely, majestic landscape" (Dana, 1971, p. 2) characteristic of Mistral's *Desolation* are these lines (stanza 1, 2, 4, 7) from "The Slow Rain," translated by Gianchetti (1993, p. 47).

The fainthearted gloomy rain

like a suffering child,
before touching the Earth,
dies.

Quiet the tree, quiet the wind,
and within the stupendous silence
these fine bitter tears
falling!
...

This long and weary descent
of conquered waters
to the prone, exhausted Earth.
...

Will you sleep
while outdoors it falls
suffering, the inert water,
this lethal water, sister of Death?

Other poems in *Desolation* convey maternal instincts of love, care, instruction of and a concern for children. As Dana states in her introduction to the collection, "For children [Mistral] speaks with a compassionate voice, tender... [and] often bitter with the awareness of the stark realities of human exploitation and poverty" (p. 2). The following excerpt (stanzas 1, 2, 3, 6) from Dana's translation of "Little Feet" is illustrative of Mistral's concern of the poor with whose lives she became well acquainted as a teacher in the remote villages of the Andes mountains and Patagonia.

Little feet of children
blue with cold,
how can they see you and not cover you—
dear God!

Little wounded feet
cut by every stone,
hurt by snow
and mire.

Man, blind, does not know
that where you pass,
you leave a flower
of living light.
...

Little feet of children,
two tiny suffering jewels,
how can people pass
and not see you!

Published in New York City, *Desolation* "placed [Mistral] among the world's great writers and established her voice as a moral influence" (Dana, 1971, p. 2). It also opened the door to Mistral's longstanding relationship with the United States. Nearly all of the poems in this collection were written before Mistral was thirty, and some before she was twenty. Besides reflecting the landscape of Chile and a concern for children, Mistral's *Desolation* is ripe with themes of young love, loss, and sorrow. Ursula K. Le Guin (2003) spoke of Mistral's voice in the collection saying "There's a serene moment here and there, but it's mostly the drastic, dramatic heights and depths of passionate adolescence and youth, with a grandly morbid emphasis on bones and ashes, blood and tears... [The poems are] testaments of consuming, devouring physical need, of greed, of grief, of unforgiving jealousy, and of rage" (pp. 3-4). Exemplifying Mistral's impassioned voice are the following two examples. The first is from a short poem, "Love Unspoken," as translated by Le Guin (p. 13).

If I hated you, I'd give my hatred

to you in words, round and sure
but I love you, and my love finds
all speech unreliable, obscure.

You'd like to hear it shouted out,
but coming from so deep, its flood
or fire fails and falters
before it reaches my breast, my throat.

A millpond full to overflowing,
I seem to you a spring gone dry,
and suffer from my wretched silence
worse than if I had to die.

The second example of this impassioned voice is from "Verses," also translated by Le Guin. This excerpt (stanzas 1, 3, 6) adds the element of religion which was common in Mistral's writing (p. 27).

In my mouth everything acquires a lasting taste of tears;
my daily bread, my poems,
even my prayers.

...

Eyes jammed
with hot tears,
mouth clamped on pain,
and crammed with prayers.

...

Flesh of misery,
pitiful left-over, tired to death,
that won't lie down to rest
beside you, but clings quivering
to Life's shameless breast!

5.2 Tenderness (1924)

Mistral's second collection of poems, *Tenderness*, was published in 1924. *Tenderness* was first published in Madrid and is a collection of poems for mothers and children. Some of the poems in this collection also appeared in Mistral's first collection, *Desolation* (1922). Part of what Mistral hoped to accomplish with *Tenderness* was to encourage the development of literature for children. *Tenderness* reflects Mistral's "deep sense of the maternal" as well as her "lifelong devotion to teaching" (Dana, 1971, p. 40). The collection includes beautiful lullabies, which Mistral calls "colloquies the mother holds with her own soul, with her child, and with the Earth Spirit around her, visible by day and audible by night" (Dana, p. 40). There are poems about children's first awareness of the material world and poems that engage the imagination through fantasy. There are also poems that teach – "poems of moralities, sentiments, and attitudes of the heart and spirit that mothers and teachers may pass on to children" (Dana, p. 40). "Small White Clothes" translated by Christiane Jacox Kyle (1996, p. 21) provides an example of the maternal in Mistral's poetry.

I knit tiny booties, I cut the soft
diapers; I want to make everything by
hand. They'll come from my depths,
they'll remember my perfume.

Soft fleece of the ewe: this summer
they sheared you for him. For eight
months your soft wool swelled like a
sponge, bleached by January's moon. It
doesn't have any small thistle needles or
blackberry thorns. The soft wool of my
own flesh, where he has slept, is just

like this.

Small white clothes! He looks at
them through my eyes and smiles,
imagining them to *be the softest...*

Encountering Mistral's *Tenderness*, readers will find the poems to be readily approachable; this is characteristic of Mistral's work. Some of the poems may even be said to have a simple or childlike quality. Mistral intentionally avoided elaborate style, as evidenced in her own words: "I have greatly struggled to achieve an elemental simplicity" (Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, 34). In their simplicity, Mistral's poems have an immediate and powerful emotional impact and upon closer examination reveal considerable depth, part of what makes Mistral a tremendously gifted poet. Her work was and is approachable for thoughtful pleasure reading as well as critical academic study.

An example of this balance of simplicity and depth is in the second stanza of "The House," also from Mistral's 1924 collection *Tenderness*. Here is the second stanza of the three-stanza poem as translated by Dana (1971). The poem begins with a table laid with "the quiet whiteness of cream" and salt, oil, and bread. As the mother is about to break bread with her son, the second stanza is a pause to remember those less fortunate (p. 73).

Lower your hand that reaches for food
as your mother also lowers hers.
Wheat, my son, is of air,
of sunlight and hoe;
but this bread, called "the face of God,"
is not set on every table.
And if other children do not have it,
better, my son, that you not touch it,
better that you do not take it
with ashamed hands.

5.3 *Felling* (1938)

Mistral's third collection of poems was published in 1938 and is called *Felling* if you go with Doris Dana's (1971) translation or *Clearing* if you were to use Ursula K. LeGuin's (2003). The title is *Felling* or *Clearing* as in the felling or clearing of trees. This collection was written over a long span of years between 1922 and 1938; during much of this time Mistral lived in Europe. In this volume, quoting the introduction from Doris Dana, "there is a continuity of the old themes found in *Desolation*—death, grief, children, religious faith, nature, and the ecstatic encounter with familiar everyday things, the mystery of the imponderable world of the spirit. Among the themes introduced are the solitude and loneliness of the wanderer" (p. 80). Given that fourteen years had passed since the publication of Mistral's second collection, *Tenderness*, Mistral had no particular time frame for publishing her third collection. She was always writing, but her work for the League of Nations and as a Chilean consul did not make publishing a priority. Mistral's decision to publish this collection in 1938 instead of later "was an act of generosity and love for innocent Spanish children who had lost their homes and their parents in the Spanish Civil War" (Gazarian-Guttier, 1975, p. 62).

Victoria Ocampo, mentioned in the "Prominence" portion of this article, financed the publication of *Felling* through her publishing house Sur which was based in Argentina, and the proceeds were sent to a hostel devoted to helping children orphaned by the Spanish Civil War (Gazarian-Guttier, 1975, p. 62; Tapscott, 2002, p. x). Mistral explained her reason for the timing of the collection's publication this way:

Now I offer [*Felling*] because I have nothing else to give the Spanish children scattered to the winds. Let them take this humble book from the hands of their Gabriela, who is partly Basque. May [*Felling*] be cleansed of its essential imperfection through the act of helping, and of being solely the instrument of my love toward the innocent blood of Spain that flows through the peninsula and through all Europe. (Gazarian-Guttier, pp. 62-62)

The poems of *Felling* convey Mistral's vision of the world as "a poetic geography which embraced all the farthest landscapes, the memories both sweet and bitter: Chile, Mexico, the Antilles, Latin America as a whole, Provence, Italy, Spain, and later California, all the lands through which she had traveled and that she had loved" (Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 63). This vastness of experience, rich with global landscapes, emotional pulls from childhood to adulthood, extensive travel, and the periodic longing for home, forms the background for Mistral's poem "Land of Absence." The following excerpts (stanzas 5 and 6 of a 7-stanza poem) are from Doris Dana's (1971) translation of the poem (p. 85).

It was born to me of things

that are not land,
of kingdoms and kingdoms
that I had and I lost;
of the living things
that I have seen die
of that which was mine
and went from me.

I lost ranges of mountains
wherein I could sleep.
I lost orchids of gold
that were sweet to live.
I lost islands of indigo
and sugar cane,
and the shadows of these
I saw circling me,
and together and loving
become a land.

According to literary critic Gaston Figueria, *Felling* "reflects the long experience of someone who has traveled the earth, enjoyed slowly the landscape and understood the typical colors of Latin America" (in Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 64). Sidonia Carmen Rosenbaum (1945) wrote about *Felling*, as "the vintage of sixteen years of intense and errant living... Its mastery, its sureness of style and precise choice of words reveal the mature artist who has gone through the bitter exercise of attaining that much prized 'difficult simplicity'" (p. 195).

5.4 Wine Press (1954)

Finally, Mistral's fourth collection of poems, *Wine Press*, was published in 1954. In approaching *Wine Press*, it is important to consider what had happened in Mistral's world in the span of sixteen years (1938-1954) since the publication of *Felling*, for which Mistral contributed all proceeds to child orphans of Spain. There was much in this period that affected the world as a whole and Mistral personally. These included the Spanish Civil War, World War II, the Holocaust, the death of many of Mistral's close friends and her sister Emelina, and above all the "tragic death in Brazil of eighteen-year-old old Juan Miguel, affectionately called Yin Yin, whom Gabriel had raised and loved as a son" (Dana, 1971, p. 122). It should be noted that another source reports Juan Miguel as seventeen years old at the time of his death (Couch, 2008, p. 15). It was in 1926 when Mistral was living in France and working as a journalist and the Chilean delegate for the League of Nations that she adopted her half-brother's infant son, Juan Miguel Godoy (nicknamed Yin-Yin), after the death of his birth mother. (Tapscott, 2002, p. x; Couch, p. 13). At the time of his adoption, Juan Miguel was just three or four years old. Adopted by Mistral, he moved from Brazil to France where Mistral raised him with the help of her friend Palma Guillen (Couch, p. 12). Juan Miguel, as would a son with his mother, lived with Mistral in various nations and accompanied her in some of her travels; at other times he remained at their current home base with Palma Guillen.

Juan Miguel was very close to Mistral "whom he often called 'Buddha' because of her power of perception" (Gazarian-Gautier, 1975, p. 75). Different works offer differing accounts of Juan Miguel's death. What is known is that his death in 1943 was officially listed as suicide by ingesting arsenic (Dana, 1971, p. 122; Couch, 2008, p. 15). Juan Miguel died in a hospital with Mistral at his side and a "brief suicide note that explained little" (Couch, p. 15). While Juan Miguel's death was officially listed as suicide, according to Dana, it is "believed by many to have been a senseless murder resulting from xenophobia" (p. 122). Gazarian-Gautier described Juan Miguel's temperament and connection with Mistral: "[He was] a very intelligent and whimsical child who possessed a talent for writing and who had a French education... [he was a] sensitive adolescent... who had grown up among adults... He would walk beside [Mistral], be near her when she was sick; he would read to her and enrich her soul with his youthful conversations" (p. 75). With regard to Juan Miguel's apparent suicide, Gazarian-Gautier speculates: "Perhaps because Yin-Yin had studied and lived in Europe, the youths resented him and regarded him as a foreigner; perhaps also because he was related to a consul and an international figure, they envied him and hated him in spite of his warm and generous personality" (p. 76). Juan Miguel, Yin-Yin, had been Mistral's primary comfort and constant as, in her diplomatic roles, she moved from city to city, nation to nation. According to Gazarian-Gautier, Yin-Yin was "more than a part of her life, he was her life itself, and his death shook her whole being, weakened her health and her desire to live. For nine days Gabriela was unable to move and for some time she remained in a state of prostration" (p. 75) This period of global turmoil and deep personal loss and grief is strongly reflected in Gabriel's final collection, *Wine Press*. Following are two examples that reflect this profound sense of loss. Both examples are translated by Gazarian-Gautier. The first stanza is from "The Bare Side," and the second is from "Cooked" (p. 77).

We walked silently
 holding each other's hand
 and our blood would speak
 with the same beat of our pulse.
 Now, I carry lifeless
 this right hand, this body.

...

In the lapse of a night,
 my sun fell, my day left,
 and my flesh became like smoke
 that a child slashes with his hand.
 Colors faded from my clothes,
 white and blue vanished
 and I found myself one morning
 a pine tree, smoldering in ashes.

6. Conclusion

While little of Gabriela Mistral's prose has been translated into English, selections from her four major collections of poetry have. It is important to note, though, that to date—and it has been seventy years since the publication of Mistral's last collection, *Wine Press* (1954)—there has yet to be an English translation of her complete collected works. On the one hand, this is understandable, given that such a volume, if presented in a bi-lingual fashion, would exceed eight hundred pages. However, the complete works could be presented in four-part set: *Desolation* (1922), *Tenderness* (1924), *Felling* (1938) and *Wine Press* (1954). Ideally, to reach a broader audience, selections from or Mistral's complete works in four volumes would be taken up by a popular press (e.g., Dover Thrift Editions) that could publish affordable editions in the ten-to-fifteen-dollar range. It is a personal passion of this article's author for Gabriela Mistral's work to get back in the hands of adolescent and adult readers for both pleasure reading and critical academic study.

Like Marie Curie (Maria Salomea Skłodowska-Curie) whom she worked with on the League of Nations' International Committee on Intellectual Collaboration, Gabriela Mistral was a leader among women, one who broadened the path for future women. She did so through work as an education reformer and as a diplomat who served in North America, South America, and Europe. Influential in the founding of UNICEF, she was a voice for children in need. As Chile's delegate to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, she worked to improve the rights of women, particularly in the workplace. Through her advocacy and her own writing, Mistral served as a spokeswoman for writers and artists, believing they have an integral role in bringing public awareness to the social and human rights issues of their day. Mistral's writing reflects a unique mix informed by her personal life experience and the historical backdrop that included two world wars, the Holocaust, and her consul service in Portugal during the Spanish Civil War.

Through Mistral's poetry, readers see a woman ever fond of her native Chile, even though she left it at age thirty-two never to live there again. She wrote of the landscape's beauty as well as its harshness and isolation. Informed by her religious faith, years teaching in impoverished, remote villages, and personal losses that affected her deeply, Mistral's writing balances hope and despair, eternal triumph and prolonged grief. Given her vast experience living as a global citizen who, through her diplomatic efforts, was able to effect positive change but also see the effects of war and poverty, Mistral's works demonstrate incredible empathy and a passionate concern for the downtrodden. Most importantly, though, Mistral's writing is that which touches the heart and soul. Upon reading Mistral's poems, readers know they are not alone but rather that they, that *we*, are part of something much bigger than ourselves. Whether capturing an intimate moment between a mother and child or putting the reader in a view both fear-inducing and awe-struck of the Andes mountains, whether in a fit of jealous rage or private moment of personal grief and longing, whether instructing the teacher or encouraging the artist, the writing of Gabriela Mistral taps the mind and emotions and gives a sense of one's place in the universe with moments both solitary and interconnected. May her writing return to eminence.

6.1 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This essay has had a threefold purpose of 1) introducing readers to the life and writing of Gabriela Mistral in a coherent manner that generally traces her life from birth to death; 2) providing examples of Mistral's writing that demonstrate themes in her work and dovetail with key life events and relationships; and 3) entreating readers to read Mistral for themselves and help her work return to prominence in English translation. In relation to items one and two, the essay has been a balancing act of providing

enough depth to be nuanced and interesting, but not so much as to encumber readers and not so little as to be superficial. Many areas lend themselves to further research such as Gabriela Mistral's relationship with her mother, her first love Romelio Ureta who committed suicide, her adopted nephew Juan Miguel who died tragically, and her close friend and publisher Victoria Ocampo whom some suspect was a romantic partner. It is also important to acknowledge that while this article has treated Gabriela Mistral and her writing in a favorable and even nostalgic way, reminiscent of how she is viewed in Chile where "her face is emblazoned on coins and postage stamps," she is not without controversy (Agosin, 2003, p. xi). In investigating Mistral's political views, one sees evidence that she rejected the United States' involvement in Latin America, and some researchers posit that the reason Mistral's prose has not been translated into English is because its political messages were unwelcome (Sepulveda, 2003, p. 252; Saaverdra, 2003, p. 265). While this article has presented a relatively tidy and cohesive look at Mistral's life, there is much room for further study to explore the author's complexity and influence.

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