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## **California Dreaming: Gabriela Mistral's Lucid Cold War Paranoia**

**Author:** Elizabeth Horan

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## California Dreaming: Gabriela Mistral's Lucid Cold War Paranoia

Elizabeth Horan<sup>1</sup>

Gabriela Mistral's boundary crossing strategized and anticipated multiply shifting dynamics during the early years of the Cold War. Border-crossings prove relevant to the method of triangulation deployed throughout this study. As a method, triangulation draws from multiple kinds of measures, relating correspondence to interviews, historical maps and photographs, survey data, consular reports and more. From this combination of theory, method, and sources a biographical narrative develops that is at once accurate (to compensate for an ongoing stream of poorly-edited, inaccurately transcribed or attributed materials) and an intimate reflection on Gabriela Mistral's "paranoia" in post WW II era California. This study of Mistral's life and work in California from 1946-1948 reveals her experience of borders as personally empowering within the consular service, where help from nearby Mexico countered the hostilities from Santiago. Her condition as a mestiza-identified Chilean citizen with substantial international experience made her cognizant of the tensions along borders, which enhanced her understanding of race in the United States and Mexico. Harnessing the power of borders and her contacts with the media, Mistral effectively countered and undermined patriarchal and colonial power structures that sought to control and silence her.

KEYWORDS: CORRESPONDENCE, COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, GABRIELA MISTRAL, CHILEAN LITERATURE, POST WORLD WAR II CALIFORNIA LITERATURE, CHILE, MEXICO

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<sup>1</sup> Professor of English at Arizona State University, Tempe, where she teaches Literature and Translation Studies both face-to-face and online. She holds a B.A. from Barnard, the Ph.D. from UC Santa Cruz, and completed a year's special study in Archives and Information Science at the University of Michigan. She has received Fulbrights to Chile and to Costa Rica and fellowships from Harvard, Ledig House in NY, and Fundación Valparaíso in Mojácar, Spain.

## Triangulating Time and Space across Social Networks

On learning that she'd won the 1945 Nobel Prize in Literature, Gabriela Mistral, then living and working as the Chilean Consul in Petrópolis, Brazil, decided to move to Los Angeles, California. The decision seems unusual since Mistral didn't speak English and had never set foot in California. She went on to buy two houses and live almost a thousand days in Southern California at a time of growing racial unrest and a reactionary politics of labor and gender. No acknowledgment of these political and social aspects of Gabriela Mistral's Cold War residence in California appears even in the work of leading biographers who seem to have lacked access to primary sources for this period (Gazarian-Gautier 86, Teitelboim 267).

Close attention to primary sources reveals the border-crossing that characterized much of Gabriela Mistral's life in Los Angeles, where she lived in a racially-mixed neighborhood and drew on multiple allies in order to work around the patriarchal and colonial power structures of the time. Denied access and stripped of privileges in the Chilean Consulate of Los Angeles, she invested her Nobel Prize money in a house at a more upscale Santa Barbara address, where she remained until Cold War politics prompted her to leave for the Yucatan and settle near the Mexican port of Veracruz.

The many materials that Gabriela Mistral wrote and published during her California residence have never been compiled or discussed. By contrast, her presence in sites where she spent less time, such as Cuba, Colombia and Spain, has been the subject of numerous compilations and some analysis. Most remarkable about Mistral's productivity in California is how much she got done while facing health problems, a rising tide of bills from her sister Emelina, appeals for money from people in Chile, the calculated hostility of her immediate supervisor, and more. Yet Mistral published *at least* twenty-four articles in Spanish and in English in this period. She delivered at least thirteen speeches and gave at least four radio broadcasts. Throughout these writings Mistral invoked her diplomatic experience, advocated women's right to vote, noted her witness to war and called for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the protection of refugees. Her composite of multinational and border identities found appreciative audiences in metropolitan Los Angeles, where her calling California "mi país" resonated with her earlier claims to both Mexico and Chile as her "dos patrias," along with her honorary Puerto Rican citizenship (GM "En la otra..."; *Proyecto* 135).

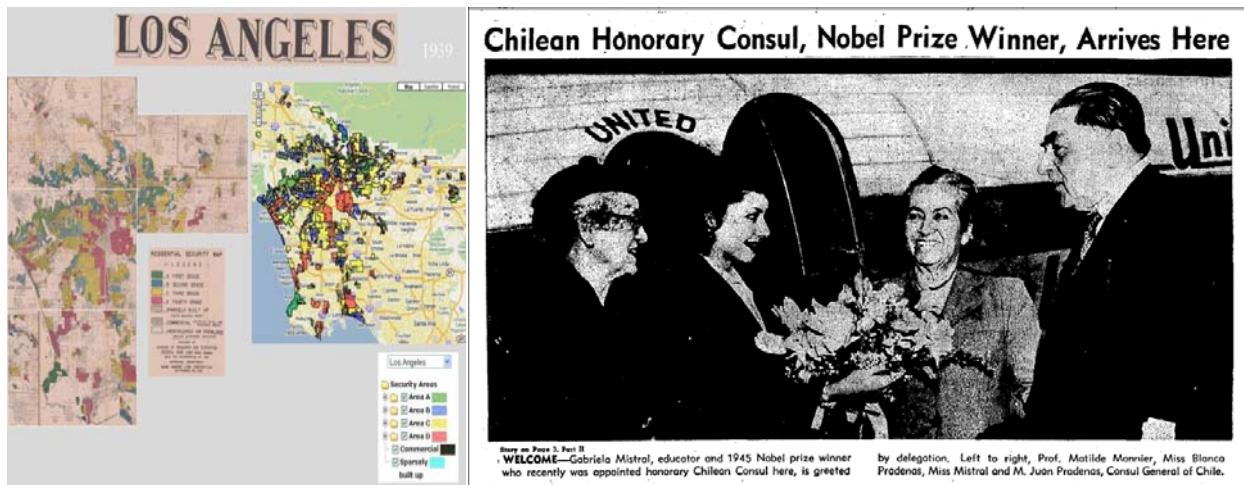


Figure 1: Residential Security Map, Metropolitan Los Angeles 1939-1945. Hypercities, T-Races Project, UCLA.

Figure 2: Gabriela Mistral arrives in Los Angeles. Los Angeles Times, 22 March 1946.

Figures 1 and 2 are drawn from the large data sets of several historical maps and newspaper collections. Methodical work with such materials forms the basis for a factually accurate understanding of the numerous non-overlapping social networks involved in Gabriela Mistral's boundary crossing amid the shifting dynamics of the Cold War.

Triangulation, a mixed-method approach, relates two or more known points in order to locate or specify a lesser-known point. The mixture of methods and measures in triangulation produces results offers the reliability necessary to developing shared measures and narratives. Triangulation draws whenever possible from larger measures such as the social network data represented in historical survey maps or sets of historical newspapers. These are triangulated with data points appearing in single *sources*, such as an interview, or in a single *kind* of source, such as an exchange of correspondence. Triangulating independent indices, using more than one instrument or kind of source, provides a basis against which to correct for errors in transcription and attribution. Triangulating dates and locations presents a wider, richer picture of the subject in the broader social setting of Los Angeles, where she connected with celebrities as well as with relatively anonymous, ordinary citizens. The method of triangulation also contextualizes her participation in the complex, fascinating, and minimally-studied networks of Chileans who lived and worked abroad in the postwar era. In California, this included a mixture of Chilean professors and writer-diplomats such

as Arturo Torres Rioseco, Fernando Alegría, Juan Guzmán Cruchaga, Raquel Tapia, Juan Domeyko and others whom she joined in witnessing and influencing changing perceptions of the Latino United States during and after World War II. Triangulation reveals these wider social universes and offers a way to discuss materials that earlier research overlooked, such as materials that the poet herself suppressed, relating, for example, to her covert diplomatic actions, medical diagnoses and treatments, possible complicity in racial injustice, and her much-noted, little understood sexual orientation.

The historical maps of the Hypercities project, based at UCLA and very partially represented in Figure 1, included materials originally developed by banks and insurance companies in order to depict and enforce the race and class-based segregation of Los Angeles. Triangulating these with data from the poet's correspondence offers a good example of the sort of circumstances that Mistral hid from view: the first house that she bought in Los Angeles stood at the edge of a "redlined" district, an area where banks and insurance companies made home loans to African Americans and Mexican Americans at higher prices, while denying home loans when members of these groups tried to purchase real estate in areas where the homeowners were of White, European descent. (The poet lived quite far from Los Angeles' significant Asian and Asian-American populations.)

The new Nobel Laureate never notes that she lives in a "borderline" area, as shown by Figure 1. Nor does she say why she chose to buy a home in one of Los Angeles' more racially-mixed, peripheral neighborhoods. But hints as to her choices arise from the combination of her letters and reports from the *Los Angeles Times*. A systematic study of that historical newspaper collection provides the third part of the triangle already formed by the other two points, in the conjunction of historical survey maps with the poet's correspondence. That third point reveals the serious hostility of the Chilean Consul to Los Angeles, which Gabriela Mistral encountered on moving to Los Angeles, as is represented in part by the posed photo of Figure 2, showing the small welcome party that greeted the new Nobel Laureate's arrival in Los Angeles.

Figures 1 and 2 are closely related, for *the* defining subtext to Mistral's presence in California is the feigned welcome, but actual antagonism of her nominal supervisor, Chilean Consul General, Juan Pradenas. As Pradenas likely regarded the new Nobel Laureate as a potential rival for his job, he had no reason to offer a genuine welcome. Yet his position and hers required a show of good will, even though he'd already begun using the press to make her feel unwelcome. This hostility is

detailed in three different kinds of sources: her private letters, the pages of the *Los Angeles Times*, and the letters, memoirs, and actions of third parties.

Interesting from a biographical perspective is such duplicity and eventual antagonism on the part of a representative of the Chilean government neither surprised nor fazed the new Nobel Laureate. Rather, Gabriela Mistral managed and ultimately outwitted her antagonist. The sequential study of multiple sources, ranging from incidents related in letters, to interviews, local news reports, and a glance at her relation to world and national events reveals how she did so.

### **Triangulation and Lucid Paranoia**

Triangulating the poet's consular reports with her letters and careful study of letters and reports and memoirs from other consuls and diplomats who served alongside her suggests that Gabriela Mistral was right to constantly watch her back. A number of well-informed critics have charged that the poet was paranoid (Alone, Rama, Fiol-Matta). Paranoid or not, she had real enemies thanks in part to her growing influence in world and national politics. That influence is corroborated in the quotations and reports on her travels appearing in wire services such as the Associated Press and in newspapers beyond Chile or California: the *New York Times* took a less sexist line, overall, than Alfred Chandler's notoriously conservative *Los Angeles Times*.

Evidence of Gabriela Mistral's growing influence as of the 1940s, such as her appointment to the newly-organized United Nations (an appointment on behalf of the organization, not of Chile) quite likely wounded the pride and made enemies of Chilean politicians when she withheld her support from them. Ironically, that silence coupled with the denial of her previous privileges supported her image as a woman of integrity. Her prestige was enhanced, as measured by the various Mexican and Peruvian and Puerto Rican nationalist and exiled Spanish Republican diplomats (and others) who contacted her by mail or in person. This was especially the case when she was living in California. Withholding Chilean consular privileges from Mistral enhanced her power and standing in a 20<sup>th</sup> century Republic of American and European letters. Typical of many writer-diplomats, "Ambassadors of Culture," she linked many otherwise non-overlapping networks of people and processes in Europe, the United States, and Latin America.

Mistral's increased influence and prestige among nations beyond Chile came at a moment when many of her associates were deeply concerned by and vulnerable to the anti-Communist witch hunts then developing with nexuses in Los Angeles (e.g. the Hollywood Blacklist) and Washington (in the U.S. House Un-American Activities Committee, or HUAC).

Santiago soon emerged as a third nexus of anti-Communist witch hunts and red-baiting, as Chilean President Gabriel González Videla responded to labor and social unrest by declaring martial law and re-opening the prison camp at Pisagua. As Neruda denounced these methods from the floor of the Senate, the President requested and the Supreme Court upheld a warrant for the poet's arrest. While these actions hardly surprised Mistral, she grew more anxious throughout 1948. Finally, when Chile's so-called "Ley Maldita" vanquished any pretense of democracy, depriving Communist Party members of the right to vote or hold public employment, she sought refuge in Mexico, with the help of friends, including Doris Dana, a young New Yorker that she'd just met. It was, in all, a sensible thing to do. Writers were especially targeted, for doing so publicized the work of the anti-Communists and thus increased their power. In the United States, witnesses who refused to name suspected labor organizers, Communists or merely leftist sympathizers faced jail for contempt of Congress. In Chile, where party affiliation was stated on electoral rolls, 23,000 people lost their voting rights and many were dismissed from their jobs.

A counter-argument would point out that Mistral had no good reason to be paranoid since she was not, in fact, a Communist and had never been so, and that she was merely following up on a standing invitation from Mexican President Alemán when she left California without notifying Santiago in early November 1948. But a careful look at the sequence of letters that she received from Doris Dana shows that these were nearly contemporaneous with Mistral's archival clippings from the *New York Times* coverage of González Videla's persecution of Neruda. Still another counter-argument might assert that Mistral's paranoia was more psychological than political in nature, that she showed a kind of narcissism that involved not just anticipating enemies but actually attracting them, that having enemies could be seen as a proof of merit. "Mándeme insultos," the poet reportedly told her friend Margaret Bates (interview) before she set off for the vertiginous ceremonies of her 1954 visit to Chile. One could do worse than to meditate on how the poet's paranoia relates to a recurring dramatic situation in her verses, of various ghosts that pursue her through a constantly shifting landscape.



Figure 3: Gabriel González Videla enters the Chilean Presidency, November 1946.

Figure 4: Juan Pradenas Muñoz, Source: Carton by Antonia Romera, Memoria Chilena.

Figure 5: Gabriela Mistral. Source: 23 March 1946, Los Angeles Times.

Figure 6: González Videla. Source: Cartoon by Coke, Memoria Chilena.

### A Tale of Three Frenemies

Mutual disdain characterized Gabriela Mistral's relations with Juan Pradenas, the Chilean Consul General in Los Angeles. She similarly disliked Chilean President González Videla. In each case the poor relations predated Mistral's move to Los Angeles. The poet explained Pradenas' dislike in a letter that recounted an "old and nameless story" from some twenty-two years before, back when Mistral was working in Mexico for José Vasconcelos, then Secretary of Public Education, Indigenous Affairs, and Fine Arts. Mistral describes how she'd arranged for "a number of boxes of books - a capital sum in books" to be sent from Mexico to Chile "for distribution to libraries and the night schools for workers..." Pradenas was designated to distribute them, but when Mistral inquired, she learned that "he'd sold most of them and parlayed the others... He knew that I was aware of it" (Mistral, *Proyecto* 136).

Pradenas would have been a worthy enemy. Tough and ambitious, he began his working life in the coal mines and rose to management through journalism and politics. Thanks to his role as a co-founder of the *Alianza Democrática* political party (successor to the 1938 *Frente Popular*), he became



a Labor Minister to Chilean President Pedro Aguirre Cerda, following whose death Pradenas landed a plum appointment in a booming wartime economy: Chilean Consul in Los Angeles.

González Videla, like Mistral, came from the province of Coquimbo. The two seem to have had no contacts until the Radical politician was serving as Chilean Ambassador to France at the onset of World War II. Meanwhile, Mistral worked as Chilean consul in Nice. González Videla used his late-life memoirs to portray himself as having worked thanklessly hard to help Mistral and carry out the wishes of his boss and Mistral's friend, Aguirre Cerda. Evidently González Videla commissioned various people to develop materials to help the Swedish Academy select Mistral for the Nobel. This included a translation of Mistral's poems into French and an expensive prologue, the latter from French poet Paul Valery. González Videla didn't pause to reflect that Valery didn't read Spanish, knew nothing of Latin America, and was a likely rival for the Prize.

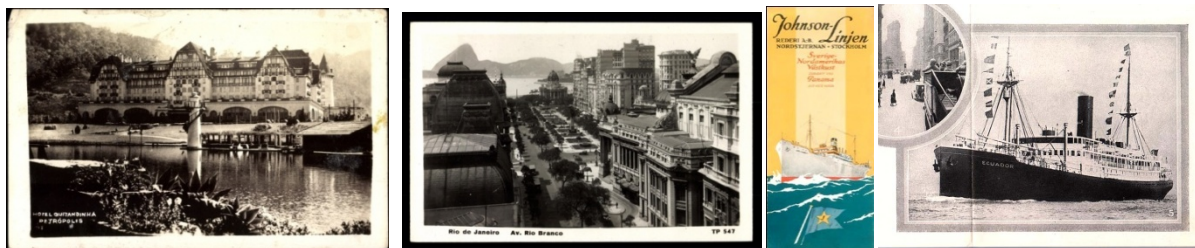
Living between war zones kept Mistral from traveling to Paris to confer with González Videla, and the mail grew less reliable. Bombers flew over Nice. Mistral's letters to Ocampo allude to her changing residences every few weeks just to find a more protected site. Her thirteen year-old nephew, Juan Miguel Godoy, nicknamed "Yin Yin" joined Mistral and her secretary, Coni, that August. Once he'd completed junior high school and his first communion, the three evacuated to Brazil, following orders from Santiago, precisely as German troops overwhelmed Denmark and converged on Norway. As for González Videla, not even the Blitz would drive him from his diplomatic post in German-occupied Paris.

Far more than in France, Mistral's consular work in Brazil involved her in writing and publishing material that presented Chile in a favorable light. Being paid for her articles by newspapers that published them was the mainstay of her income, as her travel accounts and cultural appraisals circulated throughout Latin America. Her letters, in contrast to her journalism, registered the strong and immediate impact of her new residence in Brazil. She adopted *ufanismo*, the hyperbolic praise of Brazil's natural resources, geography and people (Sadlier 4-5). At home in the tropics, friendly with many Brazilian poets, she bought two houses in the imperial resort city of Petrópolis, in the orchid-covered mountains behind Rio de Janeiro, where she was dismayed to learn that González Videla was en route to Brazil. The first clear evidence of Gabriela Mistral's scorn for González Videla seems to date from her residence in Petrópolis, in letters that refer to him as "...the

archetype of La Serena’s sham piety, classist, and strident bad taste, of bourgeois social-climbing... saturated with false snobbery, a militarized Nazi” (Mistral qtd. in *Vuestra G* 14, 71, 80).

Mistral’s role as consul and journalist required her to produce a flattering profile of González Videla, the new Ambassador, to appear in Rio’s leading newspaper. She published a hilarious squib that fulfilled the letter but not the spirit of the assignment. Her “praise” of González Videla singled out precisely those aspects where she more than outshone him. She lauds his “humble origins” in the merchant class of La Serena, precisely where she’d been excluded from school and had worked, instead, from age fifteen as a rural teacher’s aide (GM, “Un Demócrata”). She praised his bravery for having ventured off to university in friendless Santiago, exactly where she’d been attacked and driven from a hard-earned job for the sin of lacking a university degree. Mistral celebrated him as “a child of his works,” although his well-known rise came mainly from having married exceedingly well, unlike the unmarried poet’s hard work and talent (Ibid.).

The intensity of Mistral’s disdain for González Videla might have blinded her to their commonalities. Mistral used print, radio, and other media to great effect. So did González Videla, as the first Chilean President who learned to act as if he was continuously campaigning throughout his Presidency. Like Mistral, he shamelessly self-promoted. Each deployed media and especially photographic reports of their international travel for the way that it enhanced their power and prestige as national and, in Mistral’s case, international icons on the world stage.



Figures 7, 8: 1945 postcards of Petrópolis, Brazil and Avenida Rio Branco, Rio de Janeiro;  
Figures 9, 10: 1945 Johnson Steamship lines brochure, and the “Ecuador” on which GM traveled to Stockholm in Nov. 1945

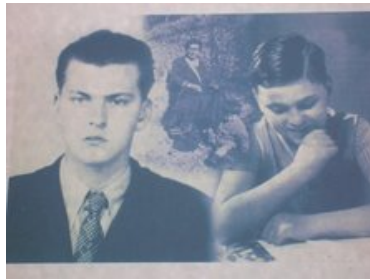


Figure 11: Juan Miguel Godoy. Source: Vargas Saavedra, *Otro suicida*

Figure 12: Left to right: Consuelo Saleva, Cecília Meireles, unknown woman, GM, husband of Cecília Meireles, Juan Miguel Godoy, in Brazil, 1943. Source: Dana/ Atkinson archives.

### **Pre-California: travel from wartime Brazil to Washington DC**

The Nobel came to Mistral almost anti-climactically after the August 1943 suicide of her eighteen- year-old nephew provoked the poet's near total collapse. Before then, she'd maintained his existence as something of a secret, mentioning him only to her closest friends and correspondents. A consequence of her travel and work was that prior to Brazil, he'd grown up variously boarding with teachers or within the household of Mistral's friend, the Mexican diplomat Palma Guillén, whose life was almost as unsettled as the poet's. A shadowy figure in his short lifetime, Yin Yin's death turned him into an *idée fixe* for the poet. He haunted her dreams, waking visions and conversation. In the wake of his death, Palma Guillén traveled to Petrópolis, where she spent the next two years and three months at the poet's side. At twilight the two women composed and recited psalms, hoping to ease the boy's soul.

In earlier days, Palma Guillén had always known just the right word to calm the poet. As six years of wartime relief work pounded away at the Mexican woman's health, Palma continued, from a distance, to help manage the poet's papers and some contacts with visitors. On arriving in Petrópolis, Palma found no way of convincing the poet to accept the boy's death as a suicide.

Rather, Mistral's paranoia turned him into the angelic victim of a plot aimed at herself (Fiol-Matta 114 *et seq.*). She eventually concluded that a gang of jealous, racially resentful companions had provoked him to take arsenic. The dimensions of that theory varied over time, but one example can be seen in her letter to Alfonso Reyes from 1954, where she writes that members of the gang visited her shortly after the boy's death and had reportedly told her, "It had to happen. He had too much. He had his name for himself and your name as a writer that gave him prestige. Also he was too white for his own good" (qtd. in *Otro* 50).

Given Palma Guillén's years of devoted service, it's ironic that Mistral was alone when news of the Nobel hit the wires. Only two weeks before, Guillén had cautiously returned to Mexico, thus depriving herself of a likely trip to Stockholm. For someone with the reputation for difficulty in handling practical concerns, the poet moved quite swiftly following the news of the prize. She booked passage on "the Ecuador," abandoning her two homes in Petrópolis and apartment in Leblón along with her dog and hundreds of unanswered letters. To justify her rapid exit, Mistral later wrote that she'd been shot "like a rocket" and "almost naked" from the Swedish boat in the bay at Rio de Janeiro (qtd. in *Vuestra* G 85). Pure adrenaline fueled her travel from Rio to Stockholm, London and Paris. In wonder and amusement French writer Roger Caillois reported that Gabriela Mistral was "carrying on like John the Baptist," issuing predictions amid massive crowds (qtd. *This America* 281).



Figures 13, 14: GM eats the Nobel breakfast of "Lucia Cakes," receives the Nobel Prize from King Gustav of Sweden.

Figure 15: Mistral visited London, Paris, and Rome before flying on to New York.

Figure 16: Mistral disliked flying but her status as an icon of modern travel required her to take a "Clipper," the first regularly scheduled transatlantic passenger flights between London and New York. Source: Associated Press.

Figure 17: GM met with U.S. President Harry Truman 16 March 1946 in Washington, escorted by Chilean Ambassador Mora and Ambassadorial staff member H. Diaz Casanueva. Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library. International News Photo.

The wire services reported the Nobel Laureate's arrival in New York, her meeting with U.S. President Harry Truman in Washington, and her upcoming plans to "return to Los Angeles where she is Chilean consul" (Associated Press). When she addressed a special session of the Organization of American States (OAS) convened in her honor, she recognized and greeted by name the many old friends and associates in the audience. Her presentation observed the strange "film-like reality" of seeing her "name on all the screens," condemned "zoological nationalism" and urged "the task of our America... a spiritually militant Americanism" ("La faena").

Meeting the poet in Washington was her good friend, the Argentine publisher Victoria Ocampo, who'd detoured from New York to see Mistral. The two had exchanged many letters but hadn't seen been together since the war began. Later that night, Ocampo wrote to her sister Angelica, describing her concern for the poet's agitated condition: Mistral had "talked nonstop, staying until 3 a.m.," telling stories that reminded Ocampo of Kafka (*Cartas Postguerra* 36). The poet's obsession with Yin Yin's death in Brazil frightened Ocampo. "When she [Gabriela Mistral] left my hotel, I started to check the closets, looked under the bed, dominated by an irrational fear. I was alone, but felt I was not alone and I was afraid" (Ocampo, qtd. *This América* 316).

### California noir

Mistral's tours and various feuds range from "noir" to near soap-opera in California, where "noir" typically has a sunny side of enjoying the good life in the company of friends. Drinking Coca-cola ("it's good for the heart"), the poet meditated on ancient trees, Pacific beaches and mountains under the *cielos azulados* of her ideal, Mediterranean climate. The "noir" of duplicities, greed and the abuse of power appeared when Mistral's enemies sought to silence her, fearing her influence in national politics and international diplomacy.

The "noir" elements extend to the poet's health and sexuality. On the sunny side, friends, assistants, secretaries watched over the poet and enabled her political survival. Her local friends and nearby allies included consuls and other writers from Mexico, Central and South America. Also important was Chilean Consul General Grez in New York, who created a channel for information from and to an otherwise distant and uncommunicative government in Santiago.

This protective network of friends was not yet in place as of March 23, 1946, when two *Los Angeles Times* reporters waited at the legendary Ambassador Hotel on Wilshire Boulevard, next to the Coconut Grove ballroom, to interview the new Nobel Laureate. One week earlier, precisely when Mistral was addressing the Organization of American States, Chilean Consul Juan Pradenas had used the pages of the *Los Angeles Times* to launch a welcome designed to put the poet in her place. While women might hold well-paid professional jobs during wartime, the new trend was to reserve the best seats for men. He'd remind her who was boss.

Gender-related ridicule appears throughout “Beloved Poet of Chile Coming to Live Here.” The piece’s only named source is “Chilean Consul General Juan Pradenas.” In classic ninguneo, or belittling, each paragraph inflates, then undercuts the subject. To dismiss her authority as a poet, the article supports racist theories about what grips “the minds of those to our south” in a rage for “fashion”: “It is characteristically Latin American that Señorita Mistral is a poet, for poetry has a much greater hold on the minds of those to our south though the fashion of the Muses growing in this country” (“Beloved Poet”). The next paragraph uses hedges and negations to question her work’s merit. “Though she has relatively few published poems - two small volumes - and though translations are at best unsatisfactory, Gabriela Mistral was awarded the 1945 Nobel Prize for Literature. A Swedish translation of some of her verses led to that. So far no very satisfactory English translations have been made” (Ibid.). The final paragraph cinches the case, noting her age “in middle life” and closing with her marital status: “She never married” (Ibid.).



Figure 18: GM with Pradenas and welcoming party in Los Angeles, March 1946

Figure 19: “Rosie the Riveter,” about 1943

## Arriving in Los Angeles

The press was invited to the small welcome party that Pradenas organized to greet the poet when her plane landed in Los Angeles. Everyone smiled. Cameras flashed (“Chilean Honorary”). Not until the following day, when Mistral invited reporters to meet her at the Ambassador Hotel, did the poet get the opportunity to speak for herself. She gave an interview that showed her experience and near-complete control of the situation, stressing the very authority that Pradenas had denied her, beginning with her political observations about the role of gender, noting her experience in diplomacy. The resulting article in the *Los Angeles Times*, titled “Chilean sees hope for the world if women vote” opens with her advocacy of women’s suffrage: “women can save civilization but they’ve got to have the vote to do it” (“Chilean Sees”). The report tacitly points out that contrary to U.N. recommendations on women’s suffrage, Chilean women cannot vote in the upcoming presidential elections. She blames the situation on “the latent medievalism” of Latin America, to which she adds a strange and memorable image, defending “tradition” as “a precious flower. I water it every day” (Ibid.).

The article’s four subheadings further show Mistral’s strategizing the interview situation: “Delegate to U. N.O., Way to Save Europe, Started as Teacher, Meeting with Sforza.” She pointed out that she is a U.N. delegate “not of Chile but by appointment of the U.N.O. itself.” Her globalist view that “votes for women could save Europe from social revolution” hints that women voters will prevent the spread of communism. She also reminds her readers of the role of women wage-earners in holding families together. “In Italy a family is large and a family is like this,—she held up a fist” (Ibid.). After this aggressive or “Rosie the Riveter” gesture she name-drops her friend Count Sforza, “the Italian liberal politician who was in Los Angeles a few years ago. He told me Los Angeles is the best place in the world to live today, and I can believe it. Here I am. Where I can rent a house?” (Ibid.).

The article presents Mistral as cosmopolitan and politically astute, identifiably Chilean in her accent, unusual in “severe clothes,” lack of make-up and how “she smiles with her mouth and her eyes.” Only the final paragraph typifies the *Los Angeles Times* postwar enforcement of hyper-femininity, portraying the fifty-six year-old poet as a flirt: “when the cameramen began their work she unconsciously illustrated what she had been saying about the traditionalism of Latin women. She hastily threw away her cigarette and saw to it that her skirts were not too high” (Ibid.).

On leaving the Ambassador Hotel, Mistral developed an article on women's suffrage that she published in *Vogue* and in Chile's *Política y espíritu*. Her thesis: "Half of the Chilean population lives on the margins of suffrage" ("La mujer chilena"). As elsewhere in her prose, she speaks from her current and prospective residence: "The Chilean woman often migrates ... to the Argentine provinces or to California, where she struggles among foreigners to earn her bread" (Ibid.). The closing alludes to Chile's imminent elections. She promises to maintain cold neutrality: "in the heated climate of the post-war" she will practice a "stern silence that is also resistance" (Ibid.).

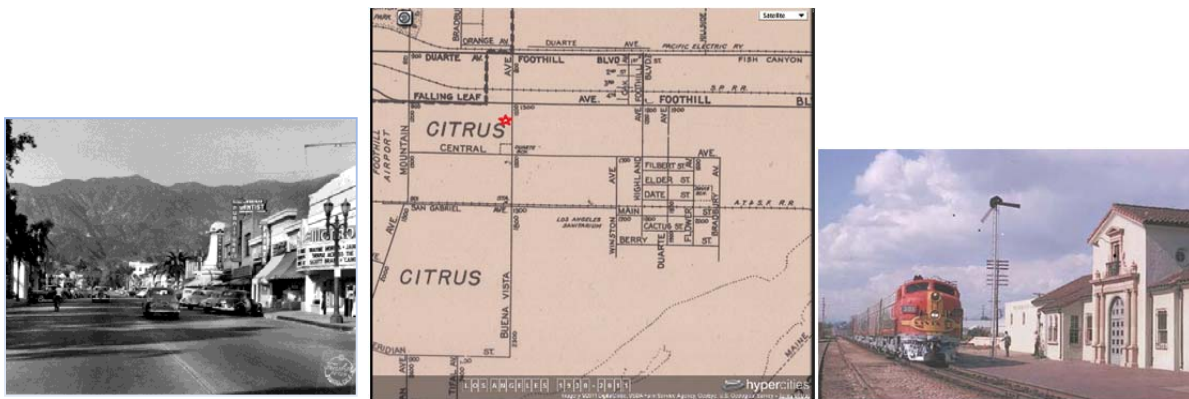


Figure 19: Myrtle Street, downtown Monrovia, late 1940s

Figure 20: GM 1946 house location marked w/ a star

Figure 21: Duarte/Monrovia Train Station, within a mile of Mistral's house.

### In the San Gabriel Valley: (Get Your Kicks on) Route 66

The floods of returning soldiers made for an insanely competitive real estate market. Nobel Prize or no, Mistral had few easy options. Pradenas tried to sell her a house that already had three mortgages on it. She declined this and UCLA's offer of an apartment. Instead, she accepted an invitation to be a guest at the family home of a bilingual friend, the poet Idella Purnell Stone. This native of Guadalajara had published Mistral, D.H. Lawrence, and the young Langston Hughes many years earlier. Mistral liked the San Gabriel foothills around the Stones' house in Sierra Madre, where she spent several weeks, leaving an unforgettable impression on Idella's two children, Marijane and Remington. Now grown, they told me about how Gabriela Mistral brought a dried up old secretary



and a big vicuña bedspread (Osborne). Both children were impressed that Mistral's mere presence transformed their home into a Chilean embassy (Stone, Osborne). So did the poet assert the diplomatic status that she lacked, while downplaying the Nobel. Also, living in Sierra Madre gave her a better control of publicity and saved money.

Mistral quickly befriended one of the neighbors in Sierra Madre, Lee Shippey, a Spanish-and-French speaking *Los Angeles Times* columnist. The two skipped off to the old-money city of Pasadena. He wrote of how they attended P.E.N. meetings and charity programs for French writers, the latter organized by the former U.N. employee Margaret Hill-Talbot (Shippey). This talented voice actress for "Looney Tunes" likely helped Mistral with radio broadcasts.

Mistral's next public actions, also reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, asserted her authority as a voice of Pan Americanism, a topic on which she had written and published for over two decades. She joined the Consuls General of Mexico and Costa Rica to call on Los Angeles Mayor Bowron, who invited them to launch the official celebration of "Pan American Week" where Mistral was described "the new Consul General of Chile" ("Pan American"). If Pradenas was angry at this slip, he would have to enjoy his revenge cold, for Mistral promptly left for the United Nations in New York, to meet with Eleanor Roosevelt and a variety of U.S. publishers, and attend a reception in her honor at Barnard College.

Pradenas used the opportunity of Mistral's absence to organize and preside over a group, "the Latin American Consular Association." That post provided a venue to further the "ninguneo" of Mistral, evident in "Woman gets Los Angeles consular post." Like the earlier mock, this *LA Times* text uses the pretense of celebrating women to actually dismisses them, in this case by focusing on one exemplary woman, the Cuban Patria Mencia de Krizman, who's described as "the sole 'working' envoy of her sex in Los Angeles, although efficient women secretaries carry the brunt of detail work in various consulates" ("Woman gets"). The article concludes by comparing Mencia de Krizman to Mistral, who isn't a consul, but "an honorary envoy" (Ibid.).

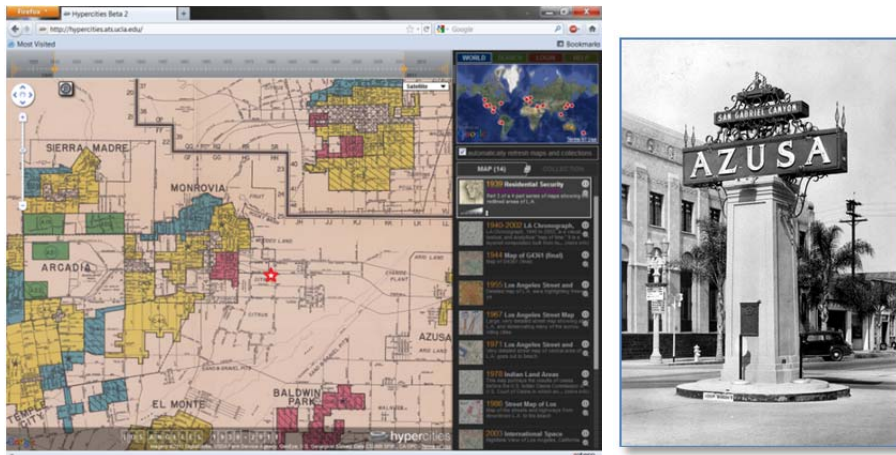


Figure 22: Red areas on these 1939 maps indicate how the red-lining practices of banks and insurance companies segregated Mexican American and African American neighborhoods by declaring them unstable and refusing to approve or demanding higher rates for loans than in the white-only wealthier green and blue neighborhoods, where professionals lived. Transitional areas are marked in yellow. Mistral’s Duarte/Monrovia house, marked with a star, is in a less developed area bordering a redlined neighborhood, to the east.

Figure 23: 1940s-era sign marking Asuza, to the immediate east of Duarte.

Further aspects of Mistral’s public profile reported in the *Los Angeles Times* and elsewhere showed her reaching out to others, countering the risk of social isolation in Southern California. By June of 1946 she was more or less settled in the San Gabriel Valley. She did not live in opulence. Mistral acquired a mortgage of \$1000, which let her purchase from the widow Lulu Hunter a rambling, older two-story house, since torn down, then valued at \$14,250, located at 1305 Buena Vista Avenue in Duarte/Monrovia.

Then at the edge of the metropolis, the site was and is a classic example of what geographer Ian Nairns has since called “subtopía,” located on multiple travel paths between outlying suburbs and the dense city center. Two major railways and an electric streetcar system lay close by. The now-historic Route 66 (Foothills Boulevard/Route 210) ran a half-block away. When summer turned to fall, the singer Nat King Cole released his hit recording, a cool jazz hymn to the muse of travel: “(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66”: “If you ever plan to motor west / Travel my way, take the highway That is best / Get your kicks on route sixty-six” (Troup).

The poet could hear the hum of highway traffic from her front door, but her letters evoked her new home’s rural qualities: “I garden, irrigate, prune from 9 to 10:30 a.m., all of which must heal

my wounds...Finally, my poor feet have calmed down...I have in front of me an orange grove, cows, etc., someone else's, but mine" (GM to Barrios; GM to Torres Rioseco in Caulfield 130). Contrary to this rustic self-promotion, her home's site was decidedly transitional. Her formerly working-class neighborhood in what had been Rancho Asuza de Duarte was becoming middle class with "advenidizas," newcomers like herself. Bank surveyors redlined the area in 1939, calling it "an old Mexican orchard laborers district, with as nondescript a lot of dwellings as can be imagined ... heterogenous and blighted...maintenance is notable by its absence" (Security Map, Hypercities). Those Mexicans were "mostly American citizens," while the better homes – such as Mistral's -- were owned, six years earlier, by African Americans, railroad workers, some 20% of the inhabitants. Mistral's house lay at precisely what the surveyors identified as borderline area, at the western edge of the Monrovia business district, amid a "shifting of subversive elements" (Ibid.).

Mistral's speeches in Los Angeles often noted the importance of Mexico in a city whose population of 3.5 million included, as she noted, "400,000" Mexicans and Mexican Americans ("Oficio sobre texto" 430). In a speech to dedicate a monument to the Mexican soldier, Mistral praised their civic contributions as nationally and internationally significant: "at an hour of risk to the U.S. and the continent itself, the Mexican race ... knew to respond" ("Pyramid"). She sought out the Guadalajara-based nuns who ran a large hospital-school quite close to her home ("On a sanatorium-") and accepted awards from a local Catholic, women's college. In both cases, the poet stressed the internationalism of the church and the capable presence of women religious.

Despite her growing network of friends, allies and associates, Mistral was vulnerable to precisely the next chain of events. As she sat alone in a huge empty house, awaiting the arrival of her furniture, the Chilean Consul General cut her access to consular resources and Santiago refused to pay the stipend that she'd previously used to pay a secretary. Where other expatriate celebrity-writers Thomas Mann and Aldous Huxley depended on wives to run their households and hire help, Mistral worked with secretaries or assistants. Mistral's economic condition was also far more precarious than Mann's: her fellow Nobel Laureate lived in posh comfort near his friends Adorno and Horkheimer in posh Pacific Palisades, where so many German-speaking expatriates had settled that locals jokingly called the area "Weimar on the Pacific" (Bahr). Aldous Huxley, her neighbor to the east, had a Belgian wife who managed both their Santa Monica bungalow as well as the cabin in the mountains of Wrightwood where he wrote and received guests such as Mistral, the Stravinskys, and Krishnamurti.

### **“Tragicomedy in this house” : Crises of September 1946**

Mistral’s desperate efforts to get secretarial support led in the worst of her setbacks in California. That crisis, which involved a number of Spanish exiles, unexpectedly culminated with Pradenas’s recall to Santiago. Understanding that crisis is useful for addressing the real puzzle of why Gabriela Mistral seemed unable to find an English-language publisher who’d take advantage of the tremendous publicity surrounding her receipt of the Nobel.

Mistral’s first major publisher, the New York-based Spaniard, Professor Federico de Onís, got wind of the Nobel Prize news before the poet did, for he wrote her shortly before the announced and later proposed to manage Mistral’s reputation in the United States. De Onís understood that she needed more than mere secretarial support to publish in English. But Mistral, who knew him well, decried him as a colonialist and declined to work with him. A stalemate ensued as de Onís (and his wife Harriet) held sway with the New York-based publishers at Knopf, Random House, and Farrar Strauss. Mistral refused to delegate the selection, translation, or editing of her work to the de Onises, but the publishers stood firm by their favorites (Mistral Microfilms).

Another Spaniard, Mistral’s friend Guillermo de Torre, co-founder of Losada publishers in Buenos Aires, married to Norah Borges, likewise appreciated the opportunity that the Nobel represented. He’d always been supportive, and thus wrote to her with warm but frank advice: “The time has come, dear Gabriela, - and forgive the friendly suggestion - that you completely leave aside all bureaucratic tasks, and get yourself a real secretary, more effective than these informal helpers” (de Torre).

Mistral agreed, but how to pay for a bilingual secretary? Living in California, her costs soared. Bills poured in from her frail and elderly sister Emelina. Lacking a secretary, Mistral’s journalism-based income dropped. The Nobel prize money would be her sole source of retirement funds. The obvious answer, Palma Guillén, was far away, returned to Brazil to discharge innumerable errands for Mistral, whose self-pitying letters grew brutal, accusing her friend of having deserted her. No wonder that when Palma Guillén returned to Mexico, she announced her September 1946 marriage to an old friend, Luis Nicolau, Ambassador of the Spanish Republican

government in exile, an enterprise that still had promise, at least in Mexico, as long as the United Nations refused to recognize Franco (Giral in *Proyecto*).

“Blessed is the man ... no one can replace Palmita” wrote the poet’s sister Emelina (Molina). But Palma wouldn’t be replaced. Rather, she delegated. She recommended a Italian-Mexican acquaintance, one Adriana Guffanti, who produced well-crafted, slightly formal, yet sympathetic letters. Guffanti’s descriptions of how she’d known and admired the now-deceased Yin Yin especially won the poet’s confidence. Of course, Guffanti would not have achieved such insight into the poet’s psychic vulnerabilities without the assistance of Palma Guillén, who was concerned by the poet’s solitude and as the third anniversary of Yin Yin’s death drew near.

With Guffanti’s letters and Palma Guillén’s recommendation in hand, Mistral asked Guffanti to join her immediately. Guffanti was then living in Enseñada, on the border, so her travel to Mistral’s house in the San Gabriel Valley couldn’t have taken more than five hours. The rapidity of Guffanti’s responses suggests how much she needed the job. Her younger daughter had suffered polio, and needed specialized treatment. When Guffanti showed up, it also emerged that she had a partner, Joaquín Seijo, a Spanish Republican exile, who was to live with them, and Guffanti hoped Mistral would help him get work. Within days, Mistral discovered the remarkable weakness of Guffanti’s writing skills. She couldn’t have written any of those letters. Rather, Seijo had composed and likely typed them as well. Further (Mistral alleged), the couple drank heavily. There was a teenager in addition to an invalid daughter.

Enough was enough. When Mistral dismissed Guffanti, the pair responded with demands that Palma described as “chantage.” In the meanwhile, Mistral had survived the anniversary of Yin Yin’s death, but she now endured what she called the “Walpurgis Night” of Chile’s presidential elections. She spent that evening reviewing the manuscript of the radio broadcast that she’d given from the London B.B.C. during her triumphal post-Nobel tour (GM in *Proyecto* 217-19). As the poet reviewed her words of solidarity for the survivors of the Blitz, she had what she called another “nightmare ... the worst of calamities” to consider: “González Videla en route to the presidency” (*This América* 157).

Guffanti and her partner wisely waited until after the elections before they sent their letters of complaint with copies to newspapers, diplomats, and political figures, including González Videla.

These letters noted the writer's cruelties, "truly strange ways" and negative comments about her colleagues and "the likely disastrous future Head of the Nation" (Guffanti, 6 Sept 1946). Guffanti demanded payment for funds that she'd spent on hotels and food for her family after being expelled from the house, "without being able to meet with her [Mistral], as she [Mistral] refused to meet me at my insistence and locked herself in her bathroom" (Guffanti, 10 Sept. 1946).

Mistral alluded to her suspicions in a letter to Palma Guillén: "I knew one day she [Guffanti] was in frequent communication with the Spaniards from here" (*Proyecto* 132). Palma Guillén's response revealed how much her values diverged from Mistral's: her great concern was that unless Guffanti was stopped, rumors that the poet was crazy would spread. But Mistral's "paranoia" led her to investigate and turn the whole awful situation turned in her favor, for she discovered the couple's link to the Chilean Consulate, as she summarized, beginning with Pradenas' wife, who, the poet claimed,

in an unspeakable manner, entered into a quarrel among the servants in my house – to which she never, ever came – and pushed as hard as she could for them to begin a lawsuit against me, in which she would be a witness, a thing unheard of. There was an official investigation, by the police, at the request of the Consul of Mexico, or rather, that tribe was expelled from American territory, as that Consul asked. While the Pradenas couple were as miserable as possible towards me, the American police watched out for my house.... (*Proyecto* 137).

The conflict ultimately held a sunny side for the poet: Pradenas returned to Chile following a farewell party that his children unsuccessfully tried to prevent the poet from attending (GM a CE *Proyecto*; Fox). The poet's letters dripped with disdain for Pradenas after his departure, as she referred the consul as "all the worst that a boss can be," "a semi-literate miner-consul (5 times minister)" (*Antología* 420-421, 451). With Pradenas gone, the *Los Angeles Times* shows that the poet roamed California at will, attending book fairs, accepting awards and collecting honorary degrees. Meanwhile, in Chile, Pradenas became Minister of Labor, with his service marked by transit and mining strikes that were met by deadly, escalating violence.



Figure 25: Hospital Room 1940s, Duarte California. Source: from the series, Duarte California Santa Teresita Tuberculosis Hospital, 1930-1950, U.S. Library of Congress.

## **Il faut cultiver notre jardin: Health and Sexuality**

Continuing the sunny side of our noir, Mistral found a middle-range solution to her domestic and secretarial challenges. She convinced her former secretary, the Puerto Rican Consuelo (Coni) Saleva, to join her in California. Mistral had one of her last sustained bursts of creative energy. It wasn't just that her productivity soared when she had help in typing her articles and managing her vast correspondence. Coni also brought Mistral to the Pasadena office of Dr. DeLamater, a specialist in tropical diseases, for the poet felt sure that she suffered from amoebas. The tests revealed advanced diabetes, a disease that her sister and perhaps her mother had suffered. Mistral's symptoms, such as intermittent blindness, predated Yin Yin's death. More drastic signs, such as rapid weight loss and slow-healing wounds, came after.

Hospitalized for three weeks, Mistral received good medical care for the first time in years. She conceived what would be her last major project, a poem designed as an herbal and spiritual remedy, as she told Victoria Ocampo: "I'm getting into a cure of the mind, bringing together only images of plants and animals. And I would just write about them, for it to heal ... "(*This A.* 158-59). She included a poem, "Lavender," recalling Ocampo's gift, eight years earlier. A letter to Isolina Barraza supplied further details about the new project, "a long poem about Chile. There are about seventy verses. Then I'll sleep "(*Carta to I. and C. Barraza, Proyecto*).

Border-crossing and botany mark *Poema de Chile* and other poems that she began or worked on while hospitalized: "Amápola" (poppy) and "Salvia" (sage) ignore national boundaries, for the "California Poppy" is the same as the "Mexican Poppy" in Arizona, whose name is "dedales de oro"

(gold thimbles) or “medales de oro” (gold medals) in Chile. Sage is from anywhere. She wrote of the California oak, native to the Mediterranean, and subtropical jacarandas, native to South America but easily acclimated in California (*Almácigo* 166, 371, 379). Writing to Palma Guillén at the end of January 1947, the writer expressed unbounded optimism: “My country, California, is a pure wonder, and according to my taste, it is more trees than humans. 500 trees for each human” (*Proyecto* 135). She began a collection of botanical books that she continued to the end of her life, from which she drew in writing her poems, and will be a valuable resource, once they’re catalogued.

The darker side of this productivity lay in the consequences of Gabriela Mistral’s refusal or inability to pay market rates for Coni’s work as a combined bilingual secretary, nurse and housekeeper. To convince Coni to travel from Puerto Rico, Mistral forged a compromise that that she regretted, of adding Coni’s name to the title, making her the one-third owner of Mistral’s Santa Barbara real estate.



Figure 25, 26, 27: GM in front of the 100-year pine tree, “mi marido” at her Santa Barbara house, 1948. Source: Album Personal. Doris Dana, GM, unknown, and Consuelo Saleva, 1948. Source: “Album Personal” Santa Barbara (April 1947). GM at Montecito Country Club Dinner, October 1948. Source: Los Angeles Times.

### **Life and Poetry in Old Santa Barbara April 1947-October 1948**

Mistral’s home in Santa Barbara stood on a hill at the end of a private lane. Her street’s indigenous name, “Anapamu,” means “place that rises” in Chumash-Barbareño and refers to an ancient Indian shrine located there (Anapamu). The poet bragged to friends of the property’s “centuries-old oaks,” which gave her tremendous pleasure (Subercaseux). Only her confidential



letters admitted that her health wasn't the reason she'd relocated: "I didn't come to Santa Barbara just for the Diabetic Clinic but because I was not permitted to work at the Consulate General of Los Angeles" ("Sobre dos invitaciones"). In near-record time, Santiago approved the move to Santa Barbara, and the poet-consul received her long-delayed exequatur (*Proyecto* 137).

When I went walking along Anapamu Street, I found that the scenario which the Chilean reporter described in 1948 has only somewhat changed. The mission-style county courthouse at the end of the street boasts interior paintings of the Spanish conquest, a more modern representation from almost the same time as when González Videla drew up the "Plan Serena" that re-colonialized the Chilean "Spanish" city of La Serena. The poet's address still begins with a climb of some fifty meters past a wall of eucalyptus, where pine trees and four houses form a small square, the central area filled with plantings of geraniums. The gardens are extensive and sunny in the afternoon, just as when Mistral amused herself with a hose that she used to water plants and spray her friends. The reporter had noted a shield and flag as marking the Chilean consulate, but these signs have long since vanished from the property (Larraín Valdes 229).

Evidence of Mistral's presence of mind in Santa Barbara appear in the poems that she began writing in the hospital and in the speeches that she gave at California's large and growing gatherings of professors of Spanish. These include "Sobre cuatro sorbos de agua" (About four sips of water), which celebrates "Vuestro gran poeta Walt Whitman" and describes the wandering and love of the land that propelled her "along long routes that reach towards your California" (107, 110). Her passionate and politically astute, "La Tierra no era caminable" (The Earth was not walkable), comments on the poem, "La Huella" (Track, or Footprint), in a witness that condemns the rabid or cold fanaticism which she saw in World War II border police, "using walls of bayonets ... or officially-stamped paper ..." (57). Asking compassion for refugees, "for their suffering flesh" in "the flight of the solitary man... a fugitive, an escaped criminal, a spy" (57), she speaks of the presence of the divine, in humanity: "This body that Christ adopted, this mold, this bill, at certain critical moments in the world must weigh as the only passport and password and sufficient argument" (58).

Mistral's words in favor of open borders came precisely as those borders were closing. Her Mexican friends - extremely well informed about the international situation - urged her to join them in Mexico. Like her, they saw how "the climate in Chile resembles California, like two halves of the same fruit" (GM, "A un sanatorio-liceo" 433). Her files included news clippings that report the

order for Pablo Neruda's arrest in Chile and disappearance into hiding. Shortly after Doris Dana read about Neruda in New York, she did something quite uncharacteristic: she down to write the first of several careful letters to Mistral, in which the young women proposed to travel from New York to California to meet her (Horan, "Innocent").

### **1948...To Mexico**

As bad as things were in Chile, Mistral soon learned of an upcoming change for the worse in her California: Pradenas was returning. Mistral blamed her misfortune on González Videla: "With regard to him, I'm guilty of knowing too much and having told him, at one time, that nonsense harmed the country ... But the regime prefers a semi-literate bureaucratic boob-sucker to an old professor with two college degrees [UCLA and Mills] in California "(Letter to Z. Gomez, *Antología* 448-449).

Mistral's options narrowed. Peron's victory removed her hopes for Argentina. In Venezuela, the government of her friend, the novelist Romulo Gallegos, fell in a military coup. She and Coni prepared to leave for Puerto Rico, but cancelled their trip when the country splintered with strikes (Horan, "Cartas"). Mistral crossed the street to speak to students at Santa Barbara High School: "there's no muse better than peace," she told them.

Drawn like a moth to the flame of celebrity, Doris Dana drove up to Mistral's door shortly after the "Ley Maldita" was passed in Chile. The two women plotted. Mistral's consular status and ongoing friendships required an official farewell, but the poet didn't dare risk drawing attention to a departure that Santiago hadn't authorized. But the Swedish Club's evening reception for Nobel Laureates at the Montecito Country Club offered a good solution. The poet slipped into the famous black velvet gown. Doris helped her pin on the silver copihue that Mistral had worn to accept the Nobel from the King of Sweden.

Following the party, Mistral and Doris Dana told the *Los Angeles Times* that they were about to leave for Mexico, driving south to the coast to Enseñada (Curletti). That was false. Friends had already begun gathering at the train station, where Coni awaited, train tickets and visas in hand. On the train from Los Angeles to El Paso to New Orleans, the writer sped through the southwest. Her "Ocotillo de Arizona" and pages about how the Anglo and Hispanic worlds collide at the Rio Grande and in Puerto Rico reflect this geography. From New Orleans, she and Coni flew on to

Merida, then continuing to Chichen Itza, “at the opening of a thousand columns” (*Almácigo* 72). The mail that filtered her way revealed that Grez, Mistral’s closest ally in Chile’s Consular Service, had been recalled from New York to Santiago to answer questions about what she was doing in Mexico. It would be another eighteen months before Santiago recognized her consular status in Veracruz (Chile RREE). Naturally, she met with friends in Mexico, including Neruda. And as before, not being in the good graces of Santiago presented the same problem as in California: how to meet her expenses?

The great Salvador Novo helped by interviewing Gabriela Mistral a few weeks after she’d arrived in Mexico. That published interview brilliantly merges their voices in a discussion whose racialized and national framing was guaranteed to whet scandal with regard to the lucrative cross-border business of contracting and trafficking Mexican labor into the US, the “Braceros” program. This part of the interview is presented as directed to Mexican President Alemán, motivated by Mistral’s concern for the “serious and dangerous, painful situation that cuts across the Mexicans who go to work in California” (Novo). This merges with the poet’s recollections of race relations in California, relevant to that state’s recent court case, *Perez v. Sharp*, the first to declare the unconstitutionality of anti-miscegenation laws:

A state of the Union whose laws literarily prohibit the marriage of Mexicans - colored – with White women. When they occur, they’re annulled and punished. But they don’t usually occur. The cattle vans arrive, loaded with Mexican workers. Single men, to live in special quarters and discriminated against. And the only contact they’re allowed is with Black women, ugly, the worst race. As the years run along, the whole region boils with creatures who are mestizos of Black women and Mexican men, who proceed to decay and erase the fine Mexican race. 'Why, in God's name, don't they let Mexican men bring their women with them?

Novo then returns to speak in his own voice:

I kept quiet about the possible explanation for this premeditated and haughty laboratory for future slaves, drawn equally from those who for many years were slaves, and from those who are now the coldly calculated object of an arms- trade that does not look to the future. And I strongly desire that before her return, before

she resumes the wonderful life that she calls transhuman, Gabriela Mistral has a chance to talk with President Alemán. So would he learn directly, rather than by the side channels of employees and inspectors, the sad reality of the Mexican workers who emigrate, not only in this Texas that is theoretically profiting, marginally, while it continues 'discriminating,' but in a supposedly liberal and civilized California. Connie listened to us and argued new painful examples of this tragic situation. (Novo 238-239).

Novo's publication of the interviews with Mistral over a series of three installments had the effect of publicizing Gabriela Mistral's presence in Mexico. This particular installment demonstrated Mistral's awareness of this fundamental aspect of US-Mexican border relations and, more important, her willingness to draw attention to the business. Novo's analysis adds further dimensions, while Coni's presence is brought in to ratify the two writers' comments.

The first fruits of the interview were soon apparent: new hordes of visitors descended on the poet. A friend of President Alemán, Rafael Murillo, later governor of Veracruz, answered Mistral's need for a place both to escape and accommodate her guests. Murillo invited the poet and her friends to live, either for free or at reduced cost, in the hotel-estate hacienda, "El Lencero," formerly General Santa Anna's but now Murillo's private property, where Palma Guillén and Nicolau had spent their honeymoon.

When Mexican President Miguel Alemán eventually met privately with the poet, the Mexican government proposed to give her a plot of land to develop. Gabriela Mistral made no further reference to the "Bracero" program of transborder Mexican laborers, and until that land deal collapsed, Mistral remained in Mexico and Doris Dana postponed their plans for travel to Europe.

## **Conclusions**

Triangulation involves locating and establishing relations between verified and lesser-known dates, people, places, and circumstances. In psychology, triangulation refers to the flow of communication when one of three people can't or won't communicate, such as when one of them is denied voice or agency. Gabriela Mistral overcame attempts to silence her by cultivating local

resources in California, where she won far more allies than her rival consul could have imagined and was far more active than has been acknowledged. Studying the materials that she wrote, published, and were written about her, it's clear that Gabriela Mistral worked from Los Angeles and Santa Barbara to develop a vast network of alliances that included other celebrities, expatriate Europeans, botanists, nuns, and more. These friends and allies were likely drawn by a combination of her personal authority, her charismatic conversation, her appreciation of California's Spanish-speaking population, and her long experience in handling journalists.

A triangulation of data relating Gabriela Mistral's life and public figure to the evidence of her manuscript drafts of poetry could help transform the legacy of conventional, ahistorical and minimally political interpretations of her poetry. The manuscript drafts that became *Lagar* (1954) and the posthumously published *Poema de Chile* (1967) point to the identifiable social, political, and spiritual concerns driving Mistral's poetry. Her letters signal the political circumstances under which she developed the plan for *Poema de Chile* at the end of 1946. Her subsequent correspondence shows how politics and her immediate environment continued to impact that text's development. Connecting the data from manuscripts and letters with systematic attention to dates, places, and social networks should spur the already-initiated critical reappraisal of *Poema de Chile* (Daydí-Tolson, Pratt, Falabella). This would build on recent approaches which argue for the originality and influence of *Lagar*, relating it to documentary and poetry of witness (Olea, Couch, Wood).

Triangulation also offers a basis for evaluating Mistral's assertions about spies and lost correspondence. Triangulation is also present in the themes of heath and sexuality, which lead like an Ariadne's thread from her hospital bed in Pasadena to her relationship with the young, flirtatious and seemingly classy Doris Dana, who liked to play nurse and visit doctors. "La Deinita" (the Little, rather than the Great Dane) replaced Coni in these areas, and surpassed her skills in watching over Mistral's California valuable real estate. Doris Dana triumphed in having inherited the poet's properties, bank accounts, memorabilia, papers and copyrights. Like many a jealous guardian, she lacked the originality necessary to developing the legacy's potential. That lack of originality would be more crippling than the challenge of working with Spanish, for Doris Dana learned Spanish from Gabriela Mistral, a verbal genius and gifted teacher. Perhaps hardest of all, Doris Dana shared the Nobel Laureate's habitual but well-founded paranoia, but she had none of the poet's ability to form allies with people who fell in love with the way that Mistral talked, caressing language, using it, as Victoria Ocampo put, "like a comb."

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